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TOLD BY THE CAMP FIRE

F. H. CHELEY

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THE STORY HOUR

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TOLD BY THE CAMP FIRE

BY

F. H. CHELEY

AUTHOR OF "THE THREE RIVERS KIDS" AND "BUFFALO ROOST"

ASSOCIATION PRESS

NEW YORK: 347 MADISON AVENUE

1922

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Prof. C. H. Berry

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To My Friend
J. G. A.
The "Camp Chief"
of These Stories

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FOREWORD

These little camp stories of real boys are put down for the first time with the only hope that they may stimulate and make more enjoyable the camp-fire story hour, so dear to the heart of every good camper.

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CONTENTS

STORY	PAGE
1. The Reformation of Juke—In Three Parts	1
2. The Mysterious Sweet Potato . .	55
3. A Midnight Raid	79
4. Burned Out by Forest Fire . . .	101
5. To the Rescue	131
6. The Hermit of Cloudy Ridge . .	159
7. Jack and Jill Go Fishing	191

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

THE STORY HOUR . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"THE LITTLE SHEET IRON STOVE WAS SET UP WITHOUT CEREMONY" . . 12

"JUKE STOOD WITH THE CHIEF LOOKING OUT OVER THE IMMENSE SPILLWAY" 52

"WE ERECTED OUR ROUGH DINING TABLE" 82

"OUR ENTIRE OUTFIT WAS PACKED ON TWO DEPENDABLE OLD BURROS" . . 104

"THE ROAD WOULD SWING OFF BETWEEN TWO MIGHTY WALLS OF SNOW TWENTY-FIVE FEET HIGH" 146

"HIS LITTLE CABIN WAS AS COMFORTABLE AS AN INGENIOUS MAN COULD MAKE IT" 164

"HE GRADUALLY DRIFTED INTO MORE THINKING THAN FISHING" 206

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TOLD BY THE CAMP FIRE

STORY ONE

THE REFORMATION OF JUKE

PART I

"I WISH every fellow could experience such a night by such a camp fire," slowly drawled Jed as he stretched his tired arms toward the starry sky and heaved a long sigh of contentment.

The happy campers drew in closer to the log fire and sat a moment in silence. The gray moon rose majestically behind a tall rock spire and then hesitated a moment before starting on her upward journey to peer down on that happy group; satisfied, she tranquilly floated behind a black cloud-ship, anchored just above the horizon, and left the valley bathed in that exquisite silver softness that can hardly be called light.

"Tell us a story, Jed," came from a big

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awkward lad who had been watching the hot pitch drip and burn from the end of the monstrous spruce log.

"Yes, do, Jed," urged a second and a third, until the request came in a chorus.

The boys had tramped hard all day, many times helping the horses up a long tedious stretch or over rough gullies, made almost impassable by angry spring freshets. Now, supper over, their tents pitched before the bright fire, their soft, sweet-scented bough bunks all arranged for the night, they were ready for a happy hour of rest and fellowship—that fellowship that comes only to a congenial group gathered about one of "Mother Nature's hearthstones" out in God's great Out-of-Doors.

"A story, eh!" drawled Jed again. "Well, it takes a night like this to make a fellow think of them." Jed cleared his throat and drew a bit nearer, for the first little autumn breezes were abroad that night and Jed, someway, needed to be entirely enveloped in the warm spirit of the fire before his recollections began to arrange themselves.

"Fellows, I'm going to tell you about the reformation of Juke tonight, for I've been thinking of him ever since we made camp

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this evening. It was the last time I camped here that Juke McClellan gave us all something to think about.

"It was our very first Gypsy Trip and, of course, we were all inexperienced. There were thirty of us in the party, ranging in size from big raw-boned Juke down to Shrimp Dalton. But we had fine weather, good food and a splendid cook, so we were, all in all, an enthusiastic and happy camp.

"The old wagon—I remember it so well—was loaded heavily, and the team, a pair of small raw-boned bronchos, did very nicely until their necks became sore. Then our troubles began.

"We made eighteen miles a day the first four days and enjoyed very comfortable camps, at deserted Pemberton and at Daffodil-on-the-Platte. Here we left the Stage Road—which, as you know, is kept in only fair shape by the sawmill teams, for it has been twenty years now since the last stage coach carried gold-crazed prospectors from Woodland Park to old North Cripple Creek—and started on the long deserted, little used, gravel road to Cheeseman Dam.

"The fishing was excellent, so we left Daffodil in high spirits and began to ascend the

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long gravel trail that worms its way through the timber, following closely the raging mountain torrent. At last we were getting into the real 'forest primeval,' back into the great, vast, unexplored reserves of Engleman spruce, lodge-pole pine and majestic wilderness.

"Daffodil, with her odd little country store, was hardly out of sight when, without any warning whatsoever, our team planned a conspiracy and balked—balked as only the offspring of those tough, wiry mustangs of the plains can balk.

"We urged and petted, then helped at every wheel. We padded collars where they rubbed on sore necks, we teased and coaxed, but to no avail. A strike had been declared and no bribe of oats or hay or bunches of tender grass would serve to arbitrate the trouble. It was to be a fight to the finish, that was plain to be seen.

"Our Chief was a very patient man and was always slow to wrath, but it was easy to see, after an hour's conscientious labor, that more strenuous methods than usual were soon to be attempted.

" 'Jed, you cut me a half dozen good alder whips,' ordered the disgusted Chief. The

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wagon, heavy laden, was blocked at the wheels while the tired group of boys climbed up at the side of the road to watch the proceeding, each one commenting on what the strike would likely mean to the success of the camp.

" 'It's a shame to be stuck here half way to the Dam, isn't it?' declared one lad.

" 'All I came on this trip for,' whined another, 'was to see Cheeseman Dam. I wish I had stayed a home.' The words were a grumble.

" 'So do I,' promptly called out the Chief, who had overheard the conversation. 'For, unless I am very badly mistaken, we will have use for every boy in this crowd who is a real camper before night. And every "quitter" will be just an added burden.'

"He carefully looked over the crowd before him. He needed a few fellows now that he knew he could depend upon; fellows who could smile through a difficulty, forget tired bodies and work just for the mere joy of doing together a big task which had to be done.

"He pulled his pocket ax from his hip pocket and cheerily called out, 'Joe, will you cut two good aspen poles, about six feet

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long, something we can pull on pretty hard? Thanks, old boy. Now, Huck, you help me get out that picket rope.' Huck jumped to his feet and was in the wagon in a second, pulling out the desired rope.

"The boys looked interested. They enjoyed watching the Chief get out of tight places, for, no matter what the situation, he always seemed to find a solution, and when his mind was once made up he was indomitable.

"Soon Huck had the rope securely tied to the front end of the tongue while Joe lashed his poles to the other end of the rope and about twelve feet apart. Joe and I took the front pole while Huck and Ham took the second. The Chief gathered up the reins, chose the best alder whip and gave the signal. We were to help the team pull the wagon, at least up the big hill.

" 'Get ep,' came the order, but the horses only jigged, shook their heads and pulled zig-zag. Then the alder whip was applied in choice careful doses, changing matters a bit for the better—we fellows on the rope putting our very best into the pull every second.

"After many delays and much whipping,

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that became more and more severe, the crest was reached. Far below us we could see the beautiful canyon of the Platte, its narrows closing in on the frothing torrent from both sides and the road descending in long graceful sweeps through the purple forest.

"We stopped to rest, believing that our labor as dray-mules was ended. But in this we were mistaken. Even on the down hill the team refused to hold the wagon back, and time and again we held our breath for fear it would plunge sideways over the steep cliff or be jolted to pieces on the rough rocks.

"The Chief dug his boot heels into the soft talus, wound the reins tightly about his hands, and wielded his whip with an ease and accuracy that we could not help admiring. But half way down the unexpected happened. The severe jogging and jolting was too much for the old wagon, and the reach-pin suddenly snapped, releasing the hind wheels from the front. In an instant the wagon pulled in two. We might have had a real calamity, for the team just then decided to run, and the Chief, being unprepared for any such actions on their part, was jerked completely off his feet. Fortu-

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nately, he held firmly to the lines and promptly turned the team into the side of the cliff, where they came to an uncertain stop, their flanks quivering and their heads shaking nervously.

"Fat, who was famous for always seeing the funny side of the most serious matter, simply exploded, and, as usual, his laughter proved to be contagious. The tension of the last two hours was broken and the ridiculousness of our situation began to dawn upon us all. In two more hours it would be dark. Here we were on the top of a high ridge, half a mile from water; a broken reach-pin, a pair of balky horses and all of us so tired that our feet felt heavy.

" 'That wagon looks just like I feel,' groaned Fat, 'all sagged down in the middle,' and with that he gave his belt a violent tug that drew it up a good half dozen notches.

" 'Sagged in the middle is right,' ejaculated the Chief as he picked himself up. 'It looks most as tired as some of you fellows do. Well, there is nothing to do, but unload, invent some sort of a reach-pin, then get down to the river as best we can. I'll warrant you really will be tired when you roll in tonight.'

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"With that he began unloading the wagon; the more energetic boys laid aside haversacks and lent willing hands. Huck, Joe and myself did the bulk of the lifting and in silence, for as soon as Juke saw there was work to be done he began to complain of a violent headache. Great strapping fellow that he was, he had never experienced a sick day in his life, in reality, but he could get, and cure as easily, many convenient ills whenever there was any real work to be done. He withdrew to a shady spot, opened his shirt neck, lay flat on his back and became silent.

"The Chief took in the situation at a glance and a look of disgust clouded his face for a second, but he spoke no word. Joe and Huck, tired from the long pull, mopped the beads of perspiration from their faces; then one spoke.

"'That boy was born lazy,' declared Huck conclusively.

"'Some boys are born lazy, some acquire laziness, while others have laziness thrust upon them,' glibly quoted Ham as he lifted a tub of lard to the ground, 'but Juke McClellan comes in on all three classes. Did you fellows know that he slept on the ground

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last night because he was too lazy to cut boughs for his bed?"

"Fat looked up incredulously. Huck interrupted with a scornful laugh. 'And that's not all,' added the Chief, 'he slept with his clothes on, and when I asked him why he did it, he just shrugged his shoulders and said it was so much trouble to dress in the morning.'

"Fat let out a howl, then as suddenly his face became serious. He began confiding to the little group about him, in an undertone, that he had found a small plug of tobacco where Juke had slept the night before and that he strongly suspected that Juke was not one of them in spirit. For such things were entirely tabooed in a camp of clean-cut, high-calibered boys such as themselves.

" 'There is a reason for everything in this old world,' declared the Chief, 'and I believe I can satisfactorily explain why Juke is so lazy and good-for-nothing. His heart is big and he can be as accommodating as you could imagine when he wants to be; but you know his home influence has been very poor and he has just sort of "growed up," sprouted, as it were, over night, and he is having so

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many new feelings, impressions and desires all at once that he is not entirely boss of himself just yet. He is on decidedly dangerous ground just now. He has in him the making of a great big, kind-hearted, thoughtful boy or the possibilities of a powerful, evil-minded, thoughtless animal. Sometimes I fear for him greatly. I allowed him to come on this trip just as an experiment.' Here a confidential note crept into the Chief's voice. 'I brought him a-purpose—conscious of the possibility, conscious of the danger. But, fellows, listen,' the Chief was bending over a sack of sugar, looking up at the comrades he had tried time and again and found true; 'if two weeks out in God's big yard with surroundings like these'—he waved his hand, taking in the whole valley—'if two weeks of walking through Nature's garden under the spell of towering crags and gentle twilight breezes; of long clear nights filled with forest music: if a dozen evenings spent by a friendly camp fire with its mingling smoke and blaze and calms, its shadow pictures and its unselfish warmth: if all these, and good companionship besides, can't help Juke, I give it up. I'm not so sure about his heredity, but I know his en-

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vironment has been that of a typical mining camp and his *will*,' here the Chief looked off down the beautiful quiet valley and thought just a moment, 'his *will* is the thing we must stir up. It's his only salvation.'

" 'It's marvelous to me, fellows, how such a tiny rudder as the will does so often safely guide big and lumbersome crafts on stormy seas. Juke is doing some rough sailing these days, believe me, and I often wonder if he ever will make a port.' Then, as if entirely satisfied with his thought, he said in a determined voice, 'He never will unless we can, in some way, bring him to some great decision. He hasn't discovered yet what it means for him to really *will* to do something.'

"As he paused, we all turned to watch the last rays of the summer sun play on the crest of a bald crag, high up on the mountain, then drop out of sight in the tree tops. 'Truth is, fellows, Juke McClellan is killing himself with cigarettes, choking his best impulses and aggravating his passions, but he doesn't seem to realize it. He is engaged in deadly combat to see who will rule that great sturdy body that Nature has given him. My heart goes out to the boy and I

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"THE LITTLE SHEET IRON STOVE WAS SET UP WITHOUT CEREMONY"

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only wish I could help. We must watch for our chance and then hit hard. It will come to us, I know it will, so keep your eyes open.'

"After much strenuous work, the old wagon was again hooked together at its middle and made fast with the help of the handle from the coffee pot and a stout limb. The duffle was again loaded, and then, much to the surprise of all, the long rope with its cross poles was securely fastened to the rear axle, while the bronchos were again hitched into place, much to their displeasure. Huck, Ham, Joe and I took the cross poles while the Chief climbed into the wagon. Slowly the descent was begun.

"Four other fellows were chosen from among the largest to relay us at the poles. Among these was Juke, but alas, when it came time for the first change, Juke was a minus quantity and was not seen again until our tired little band reached the river and began to make a crude one-night camp.

"The little sheet-iron stove was set up without ceremony and the evening meal was soon under way. But it took wood, a huge pile of it, for that camp stove, and the cutting of it that night would be a testing time

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not soon to be forgotten. Someone suggested to Juke that he lend a hand, as he had done nothing all day, but the suggestion only brought forth a volley of protest and a grand display of Juke's irritable temper, with the result that Huck cut the wood while the Chief ditched the tents, for already there was evidence of an evening shower.

"An hour later, when the Chief slipped noiselessly down the leafy, needle-covered trail to the water's edge for a pail of drinking water, he was not surprised to find Juke, calmly seated on an old stump by the side of the river, lost in a revery and puffing meditatively at a crude home-made cigarette.

"The merry gurgle of the river had swallowed up the sound of footsteps, and Juke gave a sharp cry of surprise when the Chief suddenly laid his hand on his shoulder from behind.

" 'Juke,' and he looked him straight in the eye with that compelling, determined look, entirely free from any anger or malice; 'Juke, it's terrible to be such a slave, isn't it? Can't I help you in any way?'

"Juke was on his feet now, awkwardly holding his hat in his hand. The cigarette had dropped from his fingers when he had

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first felt that kindly slap. His head drooped, but he said not a word. He was entirely and absolutely confused.

"The Chief felt instinctively a spirit of defiance, and, being a wise leader and realizing that his time had not yet come, he promptly changed the subject.

"The camp fire that evening was much smaller than was the custom and was merely a getting together of the brush that was close at hand. The evening devotion was brief yet helpful, above all and through all being the thankful spirit for a day of safety and for the privilege of being out in God's garden.

"The Chief noticed that Juke was absent from the group, and, slipping unobserved into his tent, he caught Juke unawares. He had thought he would not be missed, and his guilty conscience told him that he was very liable to be brought to account that evening for his actions and poor spirit, so he had determined to work his old game of being sick.

"The Chief bent over him and found he was not really sleeping, for his eyelids were quivering, but he was snoring carefully made

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snores, and he lay in an attitude of absolute exhaustion.

" 'Juke you can lie without speaking a word. Did you know that?' said the Chief softly.

"The faker stirred restlessly. Then, with an extra loud snore, he rolled over and snuggled into his blanket to hide his face from further observance.

"When the Chief returned to the fire, the conversation turned to the plan of action for the morrow.

" 'Well, it's just this way, fellows. We are tonight, as near as I can figure out, about twenty miles from Cheeseman Dam, and I am certain that we cannot count on our team pulling another pound until their necks get well. We have but five days' more provisions and horse feed and we are now more than twelve miles behind schedule. What shall we do?'

" 'Let's abandon the wagon, each fellow carry his share of the provisions and start back tomorrow,' suggested one lad. But a howl of protest and disappointment went up from the group at the fire.

" 'Let's cache our provisions, pasture our

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horses and walk to Cheeseman Dam,' suggested one of the tent leaders.

" 'That's impossible,' promptly replied the Chief. 'We couldn't safely cache food here, for we are in a real wilderness now and something—either bears, lions, coyotes, ants or skunks—would be sure to spoil it. Then, too, I am responsible for the team even if they are worthless and I would not dare leave them pastured for fear of losing one or both of them.'

" 'The only thing that can be done then,' said Huck, 'is for someone to stay with the provisions and horses and the rest hike it to the Dam. It will take two days for the trip. I'll be glad to stay if that will solve the problem.'

"The Chief had seen the Dam before. He could stay, and yet—his duty was with the group, for he, and he alone, was responsible for them.

"It was not until he had been in bed an hour that the solution came, and then Ham and Fat brought it in low whispers. They had sat by the fire long after the others had gone to bed, for they were too tired and weary to sleep, and they found real rest, at least for their spirits, just in the perfect

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friendship that was always at its best for them far back in the great silent places before a living, glowing pile of embers. Here heart spoke to heart and their spirits seemed to revel in the sheer delight and joy of living.

"'We have it, Chief,' whispered Ham. 'We knew you were awake or we would have waited until morning. It will take "pep," but it will work if you will let us do it. Let's cache the tents, the stove, all the tools and every pound that we can safely leave; then hitch the team to the back of the wagon, put on the other picket rope, cut ten cross poles, and we'll pull the wagon to the Dam ourselves. We can do the twenty miles in two days and can telephone from the Dam to Woodland Park for a new team. By riding the team out, they could meet us on the Wigwam in three days, and then we could force march it home. Will you let us try it?'

"The Chief thought a few moments, then sent the boys off to bed, promising to give them an answer first thing in the morning. It involved so much, he must have time to think. Satisfied, the boys slipped off to bed and to sleep.

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Part II

"The valley echoed and re-echoed with cheers, while the more enthusiastic campers threw their caps into the air and shouted:

'To the Dam or bust—
To the Dam or bust.
For Camp Tecumseh
Yell we must!'

"The Chief had just explained the plan, and, by a large majority, it was adopted. Next came the announcement of how the boys would be paired off, and Joe's heart fell when the Chief called out, 'Team one first relay, Joe and Juke; second team, Ham and Fat; third team, Jed and myself,' and so on through the list, the stoutest fellows out at the end of the rope.

"Breakfast over, the cache was made. The stove was left on the ground. But all personal wearing apparel, all bedding, except one blanket for each boy, and everything else that could consistently be left behind, was placed in the cache. The wagon was loaded, the ropes adjusted and preparations made to start. The teams were or-

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dered to their places and then, to the consternation of all, Juke was missing. The Chief was cross, for he had thought his appeal at the breakfast table had won Juke over, and his heart had been glad, for he knew it would do Juke good to do this sort of team work. There was no mistaking it, however, Juke was gone as completely as if he had never existed.

"The Chief's first temptation was to order that Juke's blankets should be left behind and that he should not be fed at noon, but he restrained himself for the time being; perhaps Juke had thought that the Chief would not give him a place on the teams because of his spirit the day before, so had hurried away to escape the jibes of the younger fellows.

"Joe took his place on the first pole and refused any help. He would do his work and Juke's too, for the teams had been carefully chosen and time was valuable now, for the Chief was anxious to make every foot possible the first day while the crowd was still enthusiastic and before the novelty of the work wore off. The morning was cool and damp, and for nearly three miles the road lay in a comparatively level valley.

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Joe set the pace and did it well, taking long even strides and not allowing the teams to run, even on the down grade.

"The morning slipped away and dinner time found us with several long hard miles behind. We ate dinner on a cool north slope in a beautiful grove of Douglas spruce, just where a sparkling creek came rushing out of the canyon and dashed recklessly into the greener waters of the big river. We missed the usual hearty noonday meal, but we were so hungry that the makeshift lunch was much enjoyed.

"The Chief had hoped that, as it neared dinner time, Juke would again put in his appearance, but he saw no sign of him except the ashes of a tiny fire and an array of fresh trout bones. These told the tale. Juke had dined selfishly but sumptuously. The Chief kept his little discovery to himself and only smiled when Ham remarked, after hearing some sympathetic talk about Juke's missing his dinner, 'He who won't work can't eat.'

" 'Accordingly, the horses ought to be fed very lightly,' suggested Fat as he roundly denounced them for the twentieth time that day.

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"The road had grown worse every foot through the early afternoon, and by three o'clock one gang was kept busy with the shovel and axes, filling ruts and cutting out fallen trees. It was up one sharp pull; block the wagon; change the rope; let the load slowly down the other side; then change the rope again and pull, pull, pull until arms were sore, heads ached, and legs quivered.

"The happy jest and pun of the morning died away and the work went on in silence, one man dropping out here and one there, until by four o'clock there were just six teams and a road crew in action. Joe gave his orders in a cheerful, happy tone and stopped his strenuous efforts only to wipe the perspiration out of his eyes or to get his breath after a hard pull. The road had swung far away from the big river and ran through a series of sharp hills all heavily timbered. It was plain to see that a wagon had not passed that way in months.

"The shadows began to lengthen, and as the wagon reached the next crest a rest was ordered while the Chief pushed on a bit to reconnoiter. He was fearful they would not strike water again before nightfall, and he alone knew what a calamity that would be;

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for, tired as they were, they could go without food until morning, but without water, never.

"He dragged his tired body up a steep ascent, clambered up a sun-lit crag and raised himself to the lower limbs of a friendly old yellow pine. Here he gazed off over the 'verdure plumed garden' to the far away fringe of eternal snows that were just then resplendent in the golden rays of sunset. It was all so quiet and beautiful that it refreshed his spirit and gave him courage to push on to water, wherever it might be.

"He began to make a closer study of the endless sea of green. Soon his trained eye was able to distinguish a band of lighter color in the soft carpet of tree tops. He studied it until, to his satisfaction, he found it ran in the direction of the river. He knew that there was water, just how much he could not determine, but, being accustomed to the great generosity of Mother Nature, he climbed down with a new hope. He estimated that it was at least four miles to the water, and as he looked at his watch he started back on the run. In four hours it would be dark.

"Ham and Fat had also been on an ex-

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ploring trip during his absence, and they reported having seen a column of smoke about five miles to the left. This, of course, offered a new topic for speculation and incidentally it drew attention, for a time at least, from blistered feet and empty stomachs: for they had not seen a human being, except of their own party, for three days, and smoke meant either a ranch, a round-up, or a camp.

"'I wonder if Juke will be in camp tonight,' said Fat in a matter of fact tone. 'I thought perhaps that was his fire and that he was cooking supper.'

"'I hope he will be,' promptly answered the Chief, 'but I wouldn't be at all surprised if we don't see him again until we get to the Dam.'

"'O shucks,' objected Ham, 'he is too big a baby to stay out all night alone, and he couldn't make the Dam tonight, that's sure, for we haven't come to Wigwam yet, or any signs of it.'

"'Well, if he does come to camp,' said Joe thoughtfully, 'I request the privilege of settling my account with him, Chief, may I?' The Chief only smiled, but made no promise.

"'I'm going to sleep tonight leaning up

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against a tree,' laughed Joe, 'for I'm too tired to cut boughs for a bed.' Fat answered that he was so lean already that such a thing would be dangerous for him, for a breeze might blow him away.

"'All you need is a good rest by a big blazing fire and some light nourishment,' laughed the Chief, 'and you will be as good as new again. I always feel a bit more like a man when I'm tired enough to know I've been working.'

"They were toiling up a long rugged stretch of road between two soft, frost-bitten, crumbling cliffs, when a shout of joy greeted them from ahead. Some of the released 'mules,' as they had dubbed themselves, had pushed on in hopes of finding water, and they, having reached the crest of the long, cruel incline and looking far down the valley on the other side, had heard, above the soft rustle of the evening breeze, the unmistakable thunder of a waterfall, a strain of that music that only a babbling mountain stream can make.

"That shout was like food to the perishing and, with renewed vigor, the old wagon was tugged and pulled, dragged and pushed to the summit. Then the faithful 'mules'

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joined in the shout of joy, for below them, twinkling through the trees, stretched the Wigwam. It ran through a big, broad quiet valley, fresh and wild, just as if man had never stepped into it since the day of Creation. There, on either side of the stream, extended a narrow belt of quaking aspens, their queer delicate leaves all aquiver and their tall stately trunks rising sixty feet into the soft twilight.

"The old wagon was let down the steep road with little ceremony and a camping spot quickly chosen in a tiny grove of silver spruce, those 'queens of the Rockies.' The wagon had hardly come to a stop when Juke shambled out of the woods and, without a word, untied the horses from the back of the wagon and led them off to the stream to drink. The Chief ignored him for the time, being busy getting things organized for the night. The big shelter tent was unloaded and Joe and Huck dispatched to cut makeshift poles, for all the poles had been left at the cache. Every other fellow who could be induced to move from his place on the soft turf was ordered to bring in firewood for the night.

" 'Tired as we are,' said the Chief, 'we

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must keep a bright fire all the night, for, remember, we are in the real wilderness now and we are very liable to have most any sort of a visitor before morning. A season never passes here that the cutters don't get a good assortment of big game. Last year the cowboys on this round-up trapped a pair of the largest mountain lions that have ever been seen in this section, and I've heard that it is not an uncommon thing for a bear to carry off a calf or a colt.'

"'A great dead pine lay here where we have our fire tonight,' said Jed, waving his hand toward the merry blaze. 'It had evidently been struck by lightning. We built our fire against it with smaller stuff. Then after supper we cut off some of the big broken limbs and dragged them into the fire. The old tent was pitched with one end facing the fire, while the other was just at the bank of the stream.'

"At supper Juke was silent. Soon after he had finished eating, he rose and went inside. Joe looked knowingly at Huck, and Ham nudged Fat expressively in the ribs.

"'Poor boy, he's all in,' said Fat in mock pity.

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"'Just worn to a mere shadow,' added Ham contemptuously.

"But the Chief said not a word. He sat thinking with his head in his hands to shade his face from the fire. He sat nearest the tent, and two or three times he thought he heard someone enter from the rear and then go out again. He listened intently until he was satisfied. Then he rose, made an excuse that he needed his sweater, and entered the tent. When he had carefully pulled the flaps down behind him, he flashed his tiny electric flash lamp for a second. The tent was empty, but in the corner nearest the stream was a little pile of fresh pine boughs spread out roughly for a bed. He sat down quietly on a pile of blankets and waited in the darkness. In a moment or two the back flap raised, and in came Juke with another armful of boughs.

"Juke, under cover of the darkness, was building for himself a good bed from boughs which he had cut and hidden during the afternoon. He had reasoned that the Chief would camp as soon as he struck water, and so he had put in his time cutting boughs while his fellow campers were high up on the moun-

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tain, tugging and wrestling with the loaded wagon.

"The little petty selfishness of it all, the nasty defiant spirit of the last few days and just the idea of that great powerful Juke preparing to sleep on a soft bed that night while the other boys, nearly all smaller than himself, must be content to roll up in blankets and rest their tired legs and arms on old Mother Earth herself, made the Chief burn with indignation. He had a great desire to whip Juke, much as he would a disobedient, spoiled puppy. Still, behind his indignation, lay that deep-seated conviction that Juke must be won, not forced, and yet—he was truly between two fires, for at the same time that he was being fair to Juke he must also he fair with the lads who had entered so completely into the accomplishing of so hard a task.

"The Chief had great faith in the fairness and judgment of such a group of older boys, and he rarely, if ever, interfered with their decisions, but, rather, sought always to influence them in the right direction by making tactful suggestions. But this night he knew not which way to turn. He remembered one other such night a few years be-

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fore, when he had acted unwisely and thereby defeated all his plans for the development of a certain boy who was always a disturbing element in the camp. Experience had taught him many things and he was content to go slowly, hoping always that kind Providence would open the way and give him light.

"As he sat thinking, Juke entered the tent from behind, spread his blanket on the pine boughs, lay down and was soon fast asleep while the other fellows still sat by the fire watching its changing moods and allowing themselves to come more and more under the control of its magic spell; their imaginations enjoying the wild revelry of sparks and dancing shadowy figures, the tiny unexpected crackle followed by the green glare and the little wreaths of curling smoke.

"They sat thus, a sweet silence on every side, dreaming and dreaming, when suddenly there broke on the still night air the wild patter of hoofs and the clear round laugh of some faraway night rider. 'What brought a rider through this peaceful valley at such a speed in the dead of night?' The question was on thirty faces.

"The Chief rose and came outside the tent, straining his ear to listen. Every head about

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the fire was at attention while the sound of hoofs came closer and clearer, until suddenly two horses could be heard. On they came at a wild gallop. The little group at the fire got hurriedly to their feet and turned just in time to see two ponies and their riders emerge from the black curtain of spruce and ride toward the fire.

" 'Pretty big fire for a camp fire, boys,' drawled the first cowboy.

" 'Looked like the hull valley was a-fire from Devil's Crag,' added the second.

" 'We are very sorry to have frightened you, gentlemen,' began the Chief. 'Our fire is larger than necessary, but it is right on the bank of the stream and will be carefully watched. We hardly felt safe here all night without a good fire.'

"The first cowboy laughed the same clear laugh which the boys had heard come floating down the valley ahead of the patter of hoofs a moment ago. 'They ain't such greenhorns after all, Bill'—'by thunder, they ain't,' laughed the other. 'If that little bear of our'n had gotten a peep at them big clouds of smoke and seen that there yellow glare in the sky, she'd 'a' been down on 'em in a

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jiffey, and then, by my old six gun, but you kids would 'a' had a merry time.'

"'We killed an immense bear up 'n the valley this mornin',' explained the first rider, 'and we have been hunting all day for the cubs; they wuz two of 'em, hungry little devils too. We hate to leave 'em, but we have the old woman's pelt along with us. Would you like to see it, boys?'

"In a second the boys were crowded around the riders and they were untying and spreading out for inspection the fresh hide of an immense black bear.

"'No use tellin' any stories around our outfit's camp fire,' went on the first rider, 'without you got the goods to prove it. Some times they'll believe a fish story or two but never any bear fairy tales without you got the proof. Ha, ha, Bill, guess we got the real backin' for our pipe dreams this time,' and he stroked the bloody hide with great pride.

"'We was just startin' for the round-up when we seen that fire and we thought we'd better take a look now as it would be easier than to be hauled out of our blankets in the middle of the night, ride ten miles like

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sin, then work like the devil till morning without any thanks from anyone.'

"They were into their saddles again and with a wave of the hand and a 'good night' they disappeared up the valley from which they had come. All signs of sleep had vanished from the boys and they must now, of necessity, sit down by the fire and talk it all over. 'Would they see the cubs?' 'Would the fire attract them?' 'What would they have done if that big mother bear had come —and brought her family?' The opinions were varied.

" 'We'd have seen Juke McClellan move faster than that dead man's pace of his,' chuckled Joe. 'I suppose he'd have gone up a tree like a cat.'

" 'You're right, he would,' added Fat, 'and no doubt we would have heard a lot of promises from some of these fellows to do better.'

" 'Say, Fat, come here,' called Ham, 'and you too, Jed and Huck and Joe. I want to tell you something,' and Ham ran and slipped back into the darkness. When all were gathered he began: 'I've got the idea and, believe me, it's right. Now listen, the Chief just told me that, while we were all

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sitting by the fire after supper, Juke sneaked a big pile of pine boughs into the tent from the back and he's in there asleep on them right now.'

"The announcement brought forth a shower of exclamations but Ham went right on. 'Fellows, I can't stand any more of this or I'll bust. We have simply got to do something to that fellow Juke, and do it tonight. Here's my scheme—let's each take one of my bandana handkerchiefs, cut eyes in it and use it for a mask. Then let the six of us slip into the back of the tent, grab Juke while he's asleep, two of us tie his hands, two tie his feet and the other two gag him so he can't holler. Then let's carry him out into that little gulch on the other side of this draw, lay him down in that immense pile of pine toppings and slash, and make him stay there alone all night.'

" 'He'll fight,' began Fat.

" 'Fight, of course he'll fight,' snapped Ham, 'if he doesn't he isn't worth killing, but the six of us can handle him surely. He's asleep now and when he sees so many fellows after him he'll think the whole camp is on to him.'

" 'We'll have to take the Chief in on this

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so he can handle the others if Juke makes any uproar,' suggested Joe.

"'You wouldn't really leave him there alone all night, would you?' asked Huck incredulously. 'Suppose those bears should come prowling around, or a bob cat, why you might frighten the kid to death.'

"'Well, it all depends on the spirit he shows,' declared Ham. 'If he becomes thoroughly frightened we can talk business with him mighty quick. But if he doesn't, I move we keep him until he does. You know what the Chief said the other day about making Juke *will* to do something; forcing him to make a great decision. Our chance has come. We can put that kid in a vise tonight and squeeze just as much of the meanness out of him as we like, or,—' and he added it thoughtfully, 'prove to the Chief that Juke is worthless and always has been.'

"'You can't ever make him believe that,' replied Joe softly. 'The Chief believes in him and—and I believe I do too. Gee, it's thunder when a fellow doesn't have a mother, his home is just a boarding-house, his dad don't understand him and he just seems to be full of meanness he can't help.'

"'Well, what do you say? Are you game

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or are you afraid of him?' asked Ham impatiently.

"They all consented and started back to the fire to enlist the Chief. He listened in silence, saying to himself, 'I must be fair to both sides.' He gave his consent at last and then turned to the fire to keep the others busy while the preliminary arrangements were being made for the raid. When he heard the shrill whistle back in the woods he knew all was in readiness, so he moved over to the tent in order to keep the fellows out in case the bandits had trouble with their victim on the inside.

"Six noiseless figures, all arrayed in blue bandana masks, made their way along the bank of the stream to the rear of the tent. The flaps were untied and they softly entered, ropes in hand, ready for their man.

"Juke was apparently sleeping heavily and, fortunately for the boys, had kicked off his blanket so that they were able to get at his feet instantly. Ham snapped his finger softly as the signal and they swooped upon Juke like a pack of hungry wolves. But, like most boys who take a very guilty conscience to bed with them, Juke's sleep had been troubled and restless. He seemed to

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have had a premonition that something unusual was about to happen to him. No sooner had the first hand touched him than he was instantly awake and alert.

"He tried to speak but, to his consternation, a handkerchief was forced into his open mouth. He tried to kick but his feet were held fast. He endeavored to raise one of his powerful arms but this, too, was held in a firm grip. A fierce panic seized him, a great fear clutched at his heart. Was he dreaming? He heard not a sound and it was so black he could see nothing. He struggled to free himself with a strength he had not known he possessed. After a great effort one arm slipped loose and he was encouraged. He gave a violent lurch forward and one foot loosened from the other. His passion was alive now and his fighting instinct aroused. He was, for that moment, a savage being hunted. He breathed heavily and now and then tiny gasps slipped from his tight-drawn lips. All he knew was that he was fighting, fighting with some great monster that seemed to be everywhere; fighting for his life and he was all alone. He thought of the great bear he had heard the cowboys telling of hardly an hour before.

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Every moment he half expected to feel the cold, wet muzzle of some great beast rubbed across his sweating face.

"He was sitting up now and both hands and feet were busy shooting powerful punches in all directions. Suddenly he seemed to understand what was happening to him. It all came back in a flash. The camp were going to have their revenge. With this consciousness his bravery fled before his accusing conscience and he felt himself getting weaker.

"The bandits had certainly found their hands full. They had never before had occasion to test the strength of a thoroughly frightened man and they thought many times that their game was up. Fat clung like grim death to one leg while Juke threw him around like a rag. Ham desperately clutched one arm but felt it slipping, slipping and he knew only too well what a blow it would deal him when once it was free. The only successful part had been the gag and it saved the day.

"What made Ham say it he never knew, but, when he felt he could hold on no longer, he cried out in a hoarse whisper, 'On with

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that rope, Bill, quick. Let's hang him and be done with it.'

"Juke swooned and then began to cry like a baby, sobbing as well as he could with so large a rag stuffed into his mouth.

"Ham took command as he always did. 'Juke,' he began, in a low undertone, 'take your medicine like a man and we'll be fair with you, but oppose us one moment longer and you are a goner. Quick, take your choice. Will you go with us without resistance or will you fight it out here?'

"Juke made a motion to rise, so they helped him up. Then Ham, to make good his threat, tied a slip noose about his neck and wrapped the other end securely about his own wrist and hand. The little column slipped out of the back of the tent and over the bank to the edge of the water and then began going up stream. Juke choked several times and, upon promising not to cause any more uproar, the gag was removed from his mouth.

" 'What are you going to do to me?' he whimpered.

" 'Hang you,' promptly replied Ham without the slightest bit of feeling in his voice.

" 'O, I'll do anything you say if you fel-

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lows will give me another chance,' he moaned between sobs.

"'We can't believe you, Juke. You know you are lying,' calmly said Joe.

"'O, I'll cut all the wood and I'll take care of the horses and I'll——'

"'Keep still, you big baby,' drawled Fat, 'every fellow that ever goes to jail talks just like that. You had chance enough to do your share but you wouldn't do it. Now take your medicine.'

"'If you had been little and weak,' went on Joe, 'we wouldn't have minded so much, but you're so big and strong. It's an insult to nature that gave you that splendid body for you to be such a sneak. You're a poor sport and a coward.'

"'I know it, O, I know it,' sobbed Juke. 'I'm all that and worse but some way I can't help it—that is, I didn't think I could. Nobody ever expected me to be like other boys, anyway,' and the anguish of a lonesome boy's heart poured itself out. 'No mother to care; my dad says I'm no good; I got kicked out of school and I lost my job, and—and now you fellows want to hang me. Oh, oh, I wish I was dead.'

"The bandits looked at each other with

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puzzled faces. If Juke would only just fight they could punish him, but what were they to do with a big sobbing boy who was trembling so he couldn't stand on his own legs. They pushed on up over the ridge, then down to the gulch and into the slash piles.

"The moon slipped out just a tiny bit from behind the black clouds as if to see the strange proceedings, and, in the light, every line in that little valley was set off in clear relief. There lay great piles of dry pine toppings, where hundreds of the immense trees had been felled, the choice logs taken out and the rest left to dry and parch in the weather. Every needle had fallen and, in so doing, exposed each twig and limb—just great monstrous piles of dead skeletons that the slightest breeze made rattle and the faintest light made ghostly. No doubt wolves lived under this cover and perhaps bears and rattle-snakes—who could tell? The moon chuckled to herself, then slid back into the inky blackness to leave the rogues to finish the work they had begun.

"It seemed to Juke that they had gone miles and miles, for the friendly glare of the dying camp fire was already lost in the dark tree tops. Where were they going, and

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what was to be his end? His imagination was suggesting all sorts of strange situations when they came to a stop well back in the piles of slash. After an awkward silence Ham began to talk.

"'Juke, there is no place in any good camp for a boy who will not do his share. There is nothing like a hard squeeze to tell what a fellow is made of and we have found you out today. First of all you have played false with the Chief and have taken advantage of him at every turn and you have taken advantage of every fellow in our camp. You have eaten food that you would not help to carry. You have slept under shelter you would not help provide. You have broken every rule of cooperative camping, and, lastly, but by far the worst, you have been false to yourself.' Ham said it very solemnly and with feeling. 'Can you imagine anything more contemptible than for a big, strapping huskie like you to be sleeping on a pile of soft pine boughs, in the shelter of a tent you refused to help pitch, while twenty-five other boys, who have toiled faithfully all day in the heat, must lie down on the bare earth to sleep? Can you imagine anything more contemptible than for a great

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giant like you to be eating food cooked on a stove, the wood for which was gathered by boys half your size while you stole off into the woods to sleep or smoke?' There was a sharp question in his voice.

"Juke stood disconsolate, the tears rolling down his cheeks as Ham went on. 'There is no place in all this world, Juke, to sit and meditate like out in some lonely mountain gulch on a dark night. If a fellow is ever going to be able to arrive at any conclusions about what he's living for, or what he's good for, he ought to be able to do it here. Juke, that's why we have brought you here tonight—to think. You are to put in the rest of the night here in this pine slash.' To Juke it sounded like the voice of doom and his distress suddenly changed to fright.

" 'You probably won't sleep much,' interrupted Joe, 'but you can do a pile of thinking.'

"Juke looked from one to the other, appealingly, helplessly, unable to make himself believe what Ham had said. He half turned and looked into the darkness while his voice grew husky as he spoke, 'And what if—if those bears should come?' he asked pleadingly.

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"'Who told you about any bears?' snapped Ham. 'Weren't you asleep when the cowboys came?'

"'Oh, no, oh, no, I wasn't,' he mumbled. 'I heard all about them. Oh, I wish you had hanged me. Then it wouldn't make so much difference. I'd rather be hanged than eaten by hungry bears.' He sank down on a blanket they had brought for him, sobbing like a baby.

"'Start at the beginning and think it clear through, Juke, old boy,' cheerily called Fat as they began to move off, leaving Juke in the gulch alone. 'It will be six good hours before daylight.'

Part III

"The bandits hurried back over their trail to camp and reported the happenings of their adventure to the eager waiting campers. Then the Chief told the boys that if Juke made good, and he firmly believed he would, they were to show the right spirit toward him and help him all they could. He told us how hard it is for some boys to find their footing and how important our parent-

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age and environment are to our development, closing with a quiet little plea for us to use our wills at all times to be and do what we ought.

"It was then decided that the six of us should go back to Juke and if he had stayed where we left him and showed any spirit to come into camp and do his share of the work we were to bring him back and consider his fright his punishment, but if we found him gone we were to further determine his punishment on the morrow.

"We slipped over the hill and as we came crunching through the dry limbs and the sage brush that had grown up among the slash we little realized the drama that was being enacted under the stars at the far end of that gulch, in the lonely hours of a black night, made more effective by that mysterious oppression that comes to one conscious that he is alone and unarmed in a great silent mountain wilderness. If we had known, no doubt we would have changed our plans. Fortunately for Juke we did not.

"Juke told me all about it one night a week later as we sat by the last burning embers of a camp fire. At first he had been too frightened to think at all, and had suffered

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agonies of fear. He told me that our footsteps had hardly died away down the canyon, and the vast quiet settled down upon him, when from somewhere out in the darkness he heard a slow, quiet movement and instantly became conscious that he was not alone. Turning his head he beheld two immense green eyes staring at him out of the blackness.

"At first his heart sank within him and then his natural impulses to protect himself roused themselves. He hastily rose to make a final stand. As he got to his feet he kicked against a loose limb and reached cautiously down to get it, thinking that it might afford a moment's protection, and delay, even if only for an instant, the end that he now believed to be inevitable. He knew better than to run. His only hope lay in bluffing. He felt a sudden dizziness coming over him, then his body began to wave gently.

"He shut his eyes that he might think the better, for his crisis had come and he knew it. He opened them in a second, when to his horror he found the eyes many paces nearer him, yet he had heard no sound except the terrible pounding of his heart. He was sure of just one thing. Those eyes were

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too far from the ground to be from any animal standing on the ground. An experience of his early boyhood flashed to mind when he and his father had shot a mountain lion on top of the shed back of the cabin at the mine. He knew the eyes were not bear eyes and they were far too steady for a bob-cat's. It was a lion and she was at that very moment crouched on some great overhanging limb that he could not see, sneaking closer and closer, and when her prey had fallen asleep, tired and worn from the watch, she would drop noiselessly upon him and then—a shudder passed over his frame. Great beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead. His hand trembled violently and a passionate hatred burned within him for the fellows who had put him in that situation from which there was to be no escape.

"Then, just as suddenly, a quiet calm seemed to engulf him and he was able once more to think clearly. He thought very rapidly of all the incidents of which this was to be the tragic climax. His mind slipped back further and further until some way he seemed to see, set out in bold relief, his many mistakes and his poor spirit. He seemed to be at his own trial, taking evidence and

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weighing it, and becoming more and more conscious of his own deficiencies and failures. How long this examination went on under the careful, never shifting scrutiny of those bold green eyes he could not tell, but it seemed ages and ages to him.

"Soon he became conscious of a new feeling—an utterly new desire in his life and linked with it was a real remorse that he had failed so miserably. The thought was so absolutely new that it surprised him and his surprise only served to make him dwell upon it. It seemed to come from somewhere outside of himself—that thought that wished for just another chance, just one.

"He looked about him for something upon which to fasten his new born desire—his desire to be a better fellow—but he saw nothing, except those blinking, staring eyes. His thoughts drifted back to the old home. Its simplicities and its comforts came back with painful distinctness. His mother's face came before him with a familiarity that startled him. He remembered the little cold cabin and the night she had died. He remembered his father's anguish and the misfortune that seemed from that time on to forever follow him.

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"He reflected that no one had ever seemed to understand him save his mother and the Chief and now even he had gone back on him. Yet if he could have just one more chance he would show him. He could prove his worth. Oh, how he longed for just that single opportunity.

"Then his heart leaped into his mouth and the cold shivers rushed over his body, leaving him weak and shaking. Something was coming through the pine slash. It was far off yet but it was coming, coming. It was, no doubt, the lion's mate and together they would—his mind became a blank. He sank to his knees and waited breathlessly, his eyes fastened on the watchful, lustrous green orbs. The noise became louder and louder, twigs snapped and dry leaves crackled on the soft carpet of dead needles. Suddenly, without a warning, there was a gentle flapping of great wings and a huge owl rose from the limb and floated away, taking with her the awful eyes. In another moment we emerged from the woods and came down the short cut to where we had left Juke, coming in at the head of the gulch and not thinking what a scare we had given him. We had added the

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last degree without knowing it, and had crystallized his great desire into a decision.

"By the time we got to him he had been there by himself an hour and anyone who has spent such an hour in the lonely solitudes of the great Rockies knows that it seems an eternity. As we came nearer Juke cried out with fright, muttering strange unintelligible sentences of surprise and excitement over his deliverance. We lined up before him and gave him a chance to speak, but his feelings had been too deeply stirred for words just then. Since our first trip a wonderful process had been going on—Juke's will had sprouted and begun to grow. It was a tender shoot as yet, to be sure, but it was alive and we gloried in the miracle.

" 'Fellows, I have been thinking,' he began brokenly, 'why did you come back? Did you think I'd run away? You thought I was a coward,' he said it half bitterly, 'but I stayed, didn't I?' Here a little note of triumph crept into his voice. 'What do you want me to do now that you have come again —go back farther into the canyon? I will go, I will do anything that is good for me.' He straightened his shoulders and threw back his head. The fellows were amazed.

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"'We have come to give you a better chance to prove yourself, Juke,' said Ham kindly. 'We have come to make you a proposition and we come as representatives of the whole camp.'

"'I'll do whatever the camp has decided,' he replied. 'All I want is one chance and I *will* make good.'

"'Good,' said Fat enthusiastically, 'I knew you would.'

"Juke reached into his pocket and pulled out his tobacco and handed it over to Ham with the simple statement, 'I'll not need it any more. Burn it for me, please.'

"Together they walked the short distance back to camp and, when near it, Ham told Juke he might slip into his tent and go to sleep if he chose, but Ham did not realize what it means to a real boy when he has once made a great decision, *willed* to change direction. He goes the entire way, no matter what the consequence and there is no stopping him.

"'To bed, never,' promptly responded Juke in a tone new to the boys. 'I want to say a word to the bunch at the fire.'

"Ham was astonished by the courage of it

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and followed him to the little circle which was eagerly awaiting their return.

"A dead silence fell on all. The night wind fanned the dying embers into a feeble flame. Far, far away, a turtle dove called to her mate. Then, after a little awkward pause, Juke spoke slowly, yet deliberately.

" 'Fellows, I want another chance. Just one to make good. Not for yourselves, but for myself. Will you give it to me?' His voice was eager as he went on, 'I am very sorry for all of my thoughtless meanness.' He paused but he wasn't through yet and all waited. 'Away out yonder in the dead stillness of the night I had a chance to think, and, as I sat reviewing my life, for some reason I thought again and again of an incident that I had long ago crowded out of my life and I want to tell you fellows about it, for it decided me.

" 'My mother died when I was nine. It was a dark lonesome night like tonight and away back in the hills. We two were alone in the little cabin far up on the mountain side by father's old mine. I wasn't old enough then to know what her going out meant to me. But just before she went I remembered she said to me, "Juke, you can

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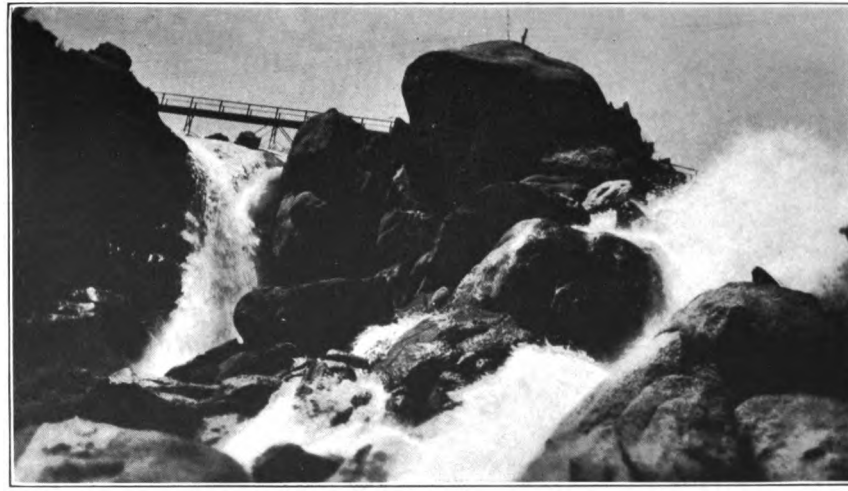

"JUKE STOOD WITH THE CHIEF LOOKING OUT OVER THE IMMENSE SPILLWAY"

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be in this world just what you want to be if you just want to be it bad enough." Poor, dear mother, I'm afraid she has been awfully disappointed in me these past years. But I *will* do better if you will let me stay with you for I want to be better, bad.' His voice sank to an earnestness. Juke's great decision had come.

"That night Juke McClellan tasted his first bit of real fellowship about a splendid fire on 'Mother Nature's Hearth-stone,' and it was a delicious experience for him. For that personality, so long dwarfed, seemed suddenly to have been released to grow in that marvelous fireside friendship.

"At noon the next day the old wagon rattled up to the Dam, drawn by ten full teams of willing boys, the balky bronchos still tied fast behind. Juke stood with the Chief looking out over the immense spill-way and talking of the tremendous power the falls created.

" 'I've just been thinking,' said Juke, after a long pause in the conversation, 'somebody had to believe there were great possibilities in that rough, rugged canyon or that splendid dam would never have been built there, would it, Chief?"

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"'You're right, Juke,' replied the Chief with a merry twinkle in his eye. 'There is many a great reservoir of human helpfulness and good in this world but it takes some real engineering to develop them usually.'

"Both understood and laughed heartily. On that spot that day a friendship was formed that was to ripen with the years and bear a rich fruit of mutual helpfulness."

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STORY TWO

THE MYSTERIOUS SWEET POTATO

"JED, come on, tell us a story," urged one wide-eyed merry lad, a bit impatiently.

Usually Jed didn't have to be urged very much to tell stories of his many interesting experiences in the Rockies, but tonight someway his thoughts seemed far away and he was perfectly content to just lie on his back as near the fire as possible and look up into the great dome above.

"Yes, Jed, do," called Ham from the other side of the fire. "Let's have one about that old miner's cabin in Bear Creek, can't you? Don't believe you have spoken of it this summer."

Jed made no reply, for he instinctively knew that if he moved or spoke the delightful spell that was over him just then—the spell of soft, sweet-scented mountain twilight, of towering canyon walls and gently

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murmuring pine tops—would be broken. A tiny scowl even crossed his face, for it seemed an intrusion to him, just then, for anyone to speak out loud. As long as the light lasted he had watched a pair of immense black eagles soar and swoop and frolic, but now even they were lost in the purpling haze.

He closed his eyes a second to rest them from the long upward gaze and when he looked again the first stars had come out. He smiled to himself as he thought how, ever since his mere childhood, he had never seen the first star come out without saying aloud, or in the quiet of his own soul, that little snatch of childhood fancy that he loved so well,

"Star light, star bright,
First star I've seen tonight,
I wish you would,
O, I wish you might,
Bring me the wish I've wished tonight."

Invariably his wish was always the same and because of its simplicity, it seemed always to be coming true. He murmured it again half aloud to himself—"Give me many

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such nights in such places before my light goes out."

He looked again and Mother Nature was now busy lighting all her candles and, to his trained eye, came the first few filmy tints of the Milky Way. He roused himself and sat up. He was, for a tiny second, almost startled at seeing so many boyish faces gathered around the fire that had seemed, but a moment ago, to be his very own. He had almost forgotten them. He yawned, then stretched himself.

"Jed, what makes you so sleepy tonight?" questioned one friendly voice near him. Jed just laughed for he wasn't a bit sleepy. He had never been any more awake in his life, or any more in tune with the great wilderness spirit than he was at that moment.

"Well, what will I tell you about, fellows?" he asked in cheery tones as he settled himself comfortably.

"Tell them that sweet potato story, Jed," said one.

Jed laughed outright, for the sweet potato story was one of his favorites and never failed to rouse him to his best. He began:

"Well, it happened like this. There was a certain group of us that had become tre-

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mendously interested in overnight hikes, and through the summer we had very many delightful jaunts into out-of-the-way places, going always to get the beauties of the long summer twilights and the wonders of majestic sunrises from advantageous points. It was the happiest summer in our lives and as the leaves began to color and fall, and the light frosts to settle on our blankets as we slept, we began to wonder if we could find an old cabin, in some quiet valley, that with proper repairs would make a winter camping place; a shelter in case of storm as well as a storing place for provisions. For with the cooler weather our appetites grew amazingly and we were no longer content with a little cold lunch after a hard tramp.

"At last we found just what we wanted; a crude little sod-roofed shack built by the side of a crystal spring; the home of some prospector of the long ago.

"It was situated away up in Bear Creek canyon where the rocky slopes were separated by nothing but a merry babbling mountain torrent that sang and danced in the sunlight, then sank to a mysterious, almost monotonous mumble in the night.

"In one corner was a crude fireplace, its

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chimney sadly out of proportion but its hearth wide and friendly; an odd home-made table, two benches and a stool. Across one end was built a double tier of straw bunks such as you often find in tie-cutters' cabins the mountains over. The door was gone and the window had long since been the target for some careless gunner.

"We decided it was just what we wanted and so began making inquiry about it. We found a well credited story to the effect that it had been built and was owned by Hank Ketchem, an old prospector who had operated for many years around the foot of Pikes Peak and had finally lost his life in this very same old shanty in a very mysterious manner.

"Now, it seems Hank had a great failing for very poor whiskey and never lost an opportunity to avail himself of a good spree. The supplies and cement for the construction of Strickler Tunnel were all hauled to Seven Lakes, over the old Bear Creek road which ran high up on the mountainside above Hank's claim. These rough teamsters used to bring Hank huge jugs of 'rot-gut,' as they called it, along with his simple bill of provisions.

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"Upon the arrival of one of these jugs Hank would celebrate his birthday—sometimes a half dozen times a year—or his wedding day or the Fourth of July, or some great anniversary. When thoroughly drunk he would wander off for days in the highest hills, climbing the most dangerous slopes and delving into deep yawning crevices between the granite strata, always happy and enthusiastic over the great gold prospects he was continually finding—in his mind.

"He was always accompanied wherever he went by a small cocker spaniel which he called Nig. Now Nig, more than any human, understood his eccentric master and loved him most. Often Nig would go days without food just following patiently after his drink-crazed master and more than once, by a sharp bark or a low whine, he had saved the befuddled prospector from a false step or had warned him of approaching danger. More times than his dog mind could remember, he had guarded the wide open door of the shanty from impertinent intruders, all the way from rough teamsters to timber wolves, from inquisitive squirrels to skunks; while his master was sleeping off a jag in the old straw bunk.

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"Nig was as well known among the saloons of Colorado City as his master was, and when, one cool September morning, very early, Nig put in an appearance at Mike O'Tool's place, his body torn and bleeding, his one eye swollen shut and his tongue hanging out, he caused quite a sensation.

" 'The Devil take me,' cried Mike. 'Nig, what on earth has yer drunken master been after doin' to you this fine mornin'? A splendid specimen of dog meat ye be for sure.'

"Nig advanced, an eager look in his one good eye, his stump of a tail wagging in spite of his almost exhausted condition. He took hold of Mike's baggy trousers and endeavored to lead him in the proper direction. When this failed he ran ahead, then stopped and barked loudly as much as to say, 'Come this way.' Just why Mike should be so very stupid Nig could not understand, but try as he would in every way his dog mind could suggest he failed to make Mike understand.

"His long, hard journey began to tell on him. The dust in the nasty cuts smarted and burned and his wounded eye caused him to whine in spite of himself. At last he sat down to rest directly in Mike's path and refused to let him pass. He sat thus before

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the perplexed Irishman when an onlooker, who had been watching the performance from the other side of the street, crossed over and offered a suggestion.

" 'The purp is wanting you to go with him somewheres, ain't he?' suggested the stranger.

" 'By Holy St. Patrick,' cried Mike, his face suddenly lighting with an idea, 'you're right, me friend. Hank must need me and durn bad too from the appearance of this little divil.' With that he knelt and patted the exhausted dog while Nig licked his pudgy hand in appreciation. Mike was beginning to understand.

"Mike was suddenly excited and ordered the little group of onlookers about much as he would the men in his stable. In a remarkably short time he and Nig were traveling toward Bear Creek as fast as the old mare could go. Carefully tucked away in his coat pocket rested a goodly bottle of fiery spirits with which to minister to Hank's needs, no matter what their nature. Nig lay patiently snuggled on one side of the seat licking his sores and bruises, while Mike talked first to the mare, then to Nig, then to an imaginary Hank.

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"After two hours of hard driving they left the High Drive, where it crosses over into Cheyenne, and began the climb up the steep, treacherous old road that winds around the south shoulder above Hank's cabin. As they neared the spot Nig gave many loud yelps, as if to encourage the drunken prospector and, when he could stand it no longer, jumped from the buggy and hurried on to the cabin.

"Mike at last came puffing down the trail, muttering to himself and cursing all the steep trails in the Rockies. He was not prepared, however, for the sight that greeted his eyes. The cabin door stood wide open, the benches were upset and the cabin in a wild litter. Hank's prostrate body was stretched flat upon the low roof of the cabin just at the side of the immense chimney. Mike called aloud but Hank made no answer.

" 'Are youse dead, Hank?' he puffed as he stood wondering how he was to get onto the roof to investigate. By placing a heavy pole to the eave and after much cursing Mike at last crawled up to the unconscious form of his friend Hank. His clothes were in shreds and the blood was clotted and hard over sev-

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eral long nasty scratches on his body, while his hands were burned and his clothes covered with soot.

"Mike was helpless and, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he again climbed down the shaky pole and hurried through the canyon to the Toll House for aid. It was night when Hank came to in the hospital and was able to talk a little. He had had a very thrilling experience and it cost him his life. He was able to tell only briefly of it before the end.

"It seemed he had just received a fresh supply of food from the city and, incidentally, a goodly jug from Mike's place had come on the same load. After placing the groceries on the shelf and hanging up, in their customary place, a sweet-scented ham and a long side of bacon, he began to sample the jug. Nig watched him with wistful eyes, for his simple reasoning powers had long ago told him there was some close connection between that jug and those long days without food and the useless, endless climbs up the rocky crests of Mt. Rosa to Castle Cliff and back. So he was always sorry when a new jug came.

"When Hank had drunk deeply, he started

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on his customary journey. How many days he wandered he never knew, but in due season he came again to his shanty haggard, worn and hungry. It was late afternoon. His spirits were low and his stomach very empty, but he was sober again and was thinking of the slices of brown bacon he would fry and eat sitting before his open fire.

"It was dusk when he reached the cabin and, to his consternation, he found it in an uproar. In all the years he had lived in the mountains no one had ever before molested his shack. It was the one unpardonable sin to a mountaineer and it made him furious. When he struck a match he let out a bitter curse for, as its yellow light flickered for a moment in the low cabin, he saw that his fresh side of bacon was gone from the nail. He struck a second match and looked again, more carefully, unable to believe his own eyes. Yes, it was gone, but the ham still hung where he had left it.

"Hank's anger flared forth afresh. Things began to move. He kindled a fire in the fireplace, cursing the rascal the while who had stolen his precious bacon and so rudely upset his cabin.

"Suddenly Nig let out a yelp and dashed

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into the cabin, but Hank's back was toward the door—he did not see the bristled hair and the low crouch of the dog. Nig growled a second, low menacing growl, and then followed it with a snarl.

"Hank turned from the fire to look straight into the eyes of an immense black bear. The bear had risen to her hind legs and stood in the door irresolute. Hank, weak from fasting and hardly yet sober, felt his hands shake violently and the cold shivers play up and down his spine. With a fair chance he was not afraid of any man that walked, but a bear—a hungry bear and a female at that. He knew that something was going to happen, for he had lost his nerve. He stood transfixed while the bear took in the situation calmly. With a shriek Nig flew at her, only to be sent instantly spinning by a powerful slap. Recovering himself, with a vicious snarl he made a flank attack and succeeded in giving the old bear a nasty nip on the side, leaping back again out of her reach.

"Under ordinary circumstances a bear would have fled from the fire, for the pine logs caught quickly and now the cabin was well lighted. However, Bruin had tasted ba-

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con, sweet smoked bacon, and the taste had lingered. Consequently she was back for more. There was more, too, for her nose told her that and her nose never failed her. The bacon had been easily pulled from the hook but the ham was too high for her the first time. Her appetite, however, had sent her back to try again.

"Hank eyed his old rifle mournfully. It was leaning in the far corner just behind the bear. His ax, too, stood just behind the door well out of reach. Slowly the bear came toward him, eyeing him closely with little watery eyes, her nose extended, whiffing and whiffing. If Hank had only known that all she wanted was the ham he would have felt better and acted differently. But as it happened the ham was on the far side of the big post from Hank and was completely hidden from his view. The bear was angry now, harassed as she was by Nig's sharp teeth. Yet she had tasted bacon and—well, she must get more.

"Hank believed his hour had come and, losing all sense of judgment, he snatched a lighted pine stick and attempted to cross to his gun. Bruin mistook his movement and, believing the much coveted ham was in dan-

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ger, she charged full upon him, slapping him and hurling him to the floor as a cat does a mouse before she kills it. Nig was crazy and such snarls he had never made before. He forgot himself now and just fought. His one eye was closed already from a powerful slap and the warm blood trickled from many tears, yet he forgot even this and fought, oh, so savagely, for his master.

"Hank remembered no more until he awoke some time in the night. The fire was low and all was absolutely still. Through the open door he could see the moon and he wondered if it would soon be morning. He could barely move, every breath tortured him almost beyond endurance. His face was crusted with blood and his head roared so he could hardly think. His eye lighted on the jug and straining, he managed, though it caused him much pain, to reach it. Then he drank deeply and long and as it took possession of his mind it crazed him again. He was now in a cabin besieged by bears, all sizes and all colors and all of them hungry, their noses up, their eyes gleaming, and there were a dozen Nigs dashing among them. The snarls filled his ears, shutting out all else. Closer and closer they came, nearer

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and nearer, and he was helpless. One huge brute knocked him crashing to the floor and as fast as he would rise another would floor him and so on until he was dead.

"Far, far away—it seemed a mile to poor crazed Hank—he saw his gun leaning against the wall, only there were a dozen of them. He felt a cold muzzle nose his face. With superhuman strength he got to his feet and stared about him. Poor Nig also got to his feet, unseen by Hank, and wagged his tail. Why didn't the master speak to him: the bear was gone, he had routed her after she had secured the ham, but his master was silent. Hank stared wildly about him. There was no escape by the door, for there were a dozen bears between him and the door. The window was fastened shut with a heavy shutter. There was just one possibility; the thought struck him favorably. He would climb up the chimney and onto the roof. There at least he would be safe. Nig watched him and could not understand.

"Hank couldn't tell how he had accomplished it, but he did and the bears had followed him to the fireplace and gazed after him as he clambered up the rough chimney to the roof. There in the cold night air he

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lay unconscious, fighting imaginary bears until he came to himself in the hospital. He never knew that Nig, after hours of waiting for the faintest sound, had gone off to the city for help. Poor Hank, his spree and his bear had been too much for him and a few days later he died.

"No one ever occupied Hank's shack after that and as the years rolled by it became merely a landmark to tell of the olden days. As I told you, we fellows decided that it would exactly suit our purposes, so we set to work at once to clean and repair it. We made a very heavy plank door and hung it in place of the flimsy slab one so that we might lock up the cabin with our bedding and food in it. We took out the old bunk and made a sweet spruce bough bed on the floor, repaired the chimney and we were ready to use it for all-night hikes."

"Where does that sweet potato come in?" asked Fat. "Did you fry it or boil it? What's a sweet potato got to do with old drunks and a family of bears?"

"Now be patient, Fat," said Jed, with mock severity, "the sweet potato is the dessert and you want it for the first course."

"Well I was going to the shack to stay

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a day or two, late that fall and I asked Jamie Dunn if he didn't want to go along. He was a fine boy from the East and had never spent a night in the mountains in his life. He jumped at the chance and we started.

"It was one of those gorgeous fall nights when the mountain air is delicious and everything seems to catch some of the tint of changing leaves and ripening fruit. Mt. Rosa had taken on her first white coat and Pikes Peak was glistening white in the twilight.

"You fellows know there is a certain lonesomeness in Bear Creek, anyway. I think it's so many great trees that stand out here and there alone that makes it, and as we walked along we felt the lonesome spirit a good deal. Dunn had to rest considerable and by the time we got to the old road it was dark. On the way I had been telling him the story of old Hank and the bears and he had been living it over there in the canyon.

"We reached the shack and soon had a merry blaze. Our packs had been heavy and we were glad to get rid of them.

" 'Dunn,' I said, 'you had better put those sweet potatoes in a tin pail and hang them on that nail or the rats will carry them

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off sure, for if there is any one thing in a camp that rats like better than another it's a sweet potato.'

"He did as I suggested but there was one big potato that he could not get into the pail, so he left it on the table. We made a good little supper and then sat by the fire and visited, but I noticed that Dunn was uneasy and nervous and every so often his conversation would swing back to Hank and the bear. By and by our eyes began to get heavy and I suggested a good snooze.

" 'Are you sure, Jed, that that door is absolutely safe?' asked Dunn somewhat timidly, just before I blew out the candle.

" 'Safe, yes,' I replied, 'you couldn't get into this cabin with an ax. There is an immense hasp on the inside and a big spike that slips through it, look,' and I held up the candle for him to see it. He seemed to be satisfied and we went to sleep. Hardly an hour had passed when I felt Dunn suddenly straighten out and gulp hard. I listened and heard a rattle among the tins on the shelves and I knew that a friendly rat was out on a nocturnal investigation.

" 'Nothing but a rat,' I said, 'Dunn, go to sleep.' He sighed a great sigh and snuggled

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up closer to me. Poor boy, he was tired out, yet his mind was so busy that the slightest sound woke him.

"I had just got back to sleep when I felt him rise to one elbow and listen. I turned restlessly and asked what was the matter.

" 'It must have rained very hard up the canyon,' he said. I asked why he thought so and he replied because the stream was making so much noise. I laughed aloud, at which there was a scamper among the tins, then all was quiet again.

" 'The stream doesn't talk till night, Dunn,' I said, 'and then it does everlastingly talk. It talks me to sleep many a night.'

"It had clouded up and occasionally a big thunderbolt would roll and echo down the canyon. A wind sprang up and the great spruce just at the end of the cabin sighed and murmured after the fashion of its kind. The last long flickering shadows could be seen on the wall. The embers were getting gray and I rolled over again to go to sleep. I had not quite dropped off when I heard the heavy plank door rattle, oh, so gently, but thinking it was just a draft I went to sleep. Not so Dunn. His ears were strained

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for every sound and even his own breathing seemed loud and unnatural to him. The door rattled a second time and more violently. Dunn sprang out of bed like a pop-in-the-box and stood shivering in his underclothes.

" 'Dunn, don't be a fool,' I growled, for I was sleepy and tired and my patience was gone.

" 'But I tell you, Jed, something is at the door. An idle little draft couldn't rattle it that way. Where's the gun?'

"I assured him the gun was handy, loaded with 44s and more shells close by, but he was too much stirred up to trust in a mere 44 rifle and weak twelve-inch logs of a cabin for safety. Finally, however, I persuaded him to return to bed and this time he went to sleep from sheer exhaustion.

"We must have slept two hours when rattle, rattle went the cabin door again, only louder than before. For the first time I gave the matter serious consideration. There is always a possibility, so I arose, lighted a candle and looked at the latch. It was in place and fast. I made an excuse that I wanted a drink then came back to bed to speculate, but ended by going to sleep. Not for long, however, for again the rattle awoke

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me. Dunn had not been sleeping for some time and the poor boy was shivering from head to foot.

" 'Could it be a bear, Jed?' he asked softly. 'You know we brought sliced ham with us.'

"I was in no humor to laugh so made no reply except that it was a pity a fellow couldn't get a bit of sleep without being bothered every little while. I had heard of porcupines prowling about cabins at night, of lynx camping near cabins and of bears trying to force cabin doors, but such things were foolishness in this locality, for one couldn't shoot even a rabbit unless one hunted a week. Bear, lynx, porcupine, or what, I cared not. I was getting savage. It was sleep I wanted and I wanted it bad.

" 'O, thunderation,' I snorted, 'are you afraid? Take the gun and go out and shoot the brute if you like.' The next moment I was sorry for my speech, but it was said and I was so sleepy.

"The rattling continued until Dunn could stand it no longer. He rose and pulled on a sweater, struck a match and found the ax. He placed the little stool in front of the door and sat down calmly to guard our lives.

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I smiled to myself: poor kid, he can't be told anything, just let him watch until he gets sleepy. I thought he'd soon be back to bed so went to sleep for the tenth time and slept a long while.

"Suddenly Dunn let out a blood curdling yell and I jumped about a foot. I fully expected to see an immense bear standing in the door, but instead it was dark, pitch dark, and perfectly quiet. I heard Dunn breathing fast.

" 'O, Jed,' he said in a hoarse whisper, 'I saw its paw. It was away under the door. My, but it frightened me. It was black fur I am sure. O, Jed, it's out there sure. What are you going to do about it?'

"I pulled on my sweater and sat down with Dunn to watch. I wanted to see that paw myself and I hadn't long to wait, I think perhaps twenty minutes, when rattle, rattle, rattle went the door and sure enough, when my eyes were accustomed to the dark, I could see something moving along in the big crack at the bottom of the door.

" 'Smash it, Dunn,' I said, controlling my voice the best I could. 'Smash it with the ax.'

"Dunn stood up in readiness waiting, wait-

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ing. We were both thoroughly excited. Again came the mysterious rattle, again the something moved along the crack. Dunn struck a powerful blow, splintering the ax handle.

"'I hit it, Jed, I hit it,' cried Dunn in great excitement. 'I felt it smash.'

"With shaking fingers I lighted the candle and together we prepared to investigate. To our utter amazement we found that Dunn had smashed to a pulp the large sweet potato that he had left on the table. We hugged each other as we laughed aloud. The tragic hour was over, the first gray streaks of dawn began to creep through the window. It was getting morning. We opened the great door cautiously and peered out. The soft, damp earth told the rest. A huge rat had been endeavoring to pull that sweet potato under that door all night.

"'And we didn't have any jug either, did we?' laughed Dunn as he gazed at the splintered ax handle.

"'No, but we saved our ham, Dunn,' I laughed, 'and so let's have breakfast right quick.'"

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STORY THREE

A MIDNIGHT RAID

"THOSE were some stunts," chuckled "Red Head" as the last act of the camp-fire entertainment came to an end. "Yes, sir, some stunts. My, it's great to be crazy. If I could think up all that dope in a lifetime I'd be doing well."

"Happy Bob is some fun, that's sure," answered Red's friend as he passed over an immense paper bag from which each camper was filling his lap. The conversation lapsed a second while the only sound was the cracking of the big jumbo peanuts that happened to be the treat that evening.

"That take off on having bean soup three times a day was a buster," said Red as distinctly as he could through a mouthful of nuts. "Believe me, I don't want to ever get into a camp where they don't have enough to eat, for you know there's just three things in a camp that I love. One is plenty to eat,

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another is plenty of big whole-souled camp fires like the one we have tonight, and the other one is—O no, there are two more things,—plenty to eat, good camp fires, good fishing, a good bed, good water, and, of course, good——"

"O, that's five things now, Red," corrected "Bugs Par," "and you know there are at least a dozen more yet."

"Well, the most important thing of all, anyway," declared Fat with conviction, "is a good plenty to eat."

"Talking about eats," spoke up one of the leaders, "do you mind the time we baked those chickens in clay over on Cheyenne Mountain? Say, boys, as old chef Si used to say, 'It sho' do make this chile dribble at the mouth,' just to think of them."

"Forget it," called Ham with mock severity from the other side of the fire. "It's at least ten hours till breakfast and we'll have some of you fellows so hungry you will be in for raiding the grub tent yet before morning. Pass those peanuts, Fat. I'd like a few myself."

"We'd have to do like we did the night the Cadets were going to raid our grub tent the year we camped at Palmer Lake,"

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drawled Jed with a merry chuckle. He was thinking of a much enjoyed experience of years before.

"Tell us about it, Jed," eagerly demanded Red Head, who had forgotten a few moments before to add "good stories" to his list of things he desired in a good camp, yet above all else, even the eats, he loved a real story.

Jed realized he had put his foot in it, and as it was a very rare thing that he refused a story, he carefully slipped his remaining peanuts into his trousers' pocket and began.

The group of boys squeezed in tight about him, half reclining on one another, just as many touching Jed as was possible. The fire had burned low and was just a great heap of glowing embers, and as the voices became quiet the merry chatter of the stream rose and fell in a monotonous undertone. A breeze murmured in the low hanging branches, while far, far up in the night a million tiny stars twinkled like a swarm of fireflies at play in the black marshes.

"It had been a very, very merry camp," began Jed in his low, musical voice, "and there had not been a single incident to mar our pleasure until the Cadets came and

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pitched their tents about a mile below us on a flat plateau.

"We had exercised the greatest care in selecting our camp site and it certainly was ideal. It was on a high level spot just at the mouth of rugged Fern Glen. Here the great-hearted, open-armed canyon, with its softly mottled shadows, its gossiping birds and chattering wild folk, its gray boulders about which the cool stream swirled only to slip quietly into deep, mysterious fern-lined pools, lay just behind us. Then at one side, through a tiny swamp where the wild hay grew lush and the wild flowers rioted in color, and where deer often came down to feed, ran a dainty little trail that wound up the rocky gorge, through the low scrub oaks, then under the mighty pines until it was lost far up the canyon in the carpet of rich, green kinnikinnik.

"We pitched the tents about wherever a flat level place afforded room, consequently they were scattered and some distance apart. Tent One was filled with 'Shrimps' as we called them. Tent Two was honored with the two fat men who, by the way, slept together and scrapped all night to see who should have the covers. Tent Three were

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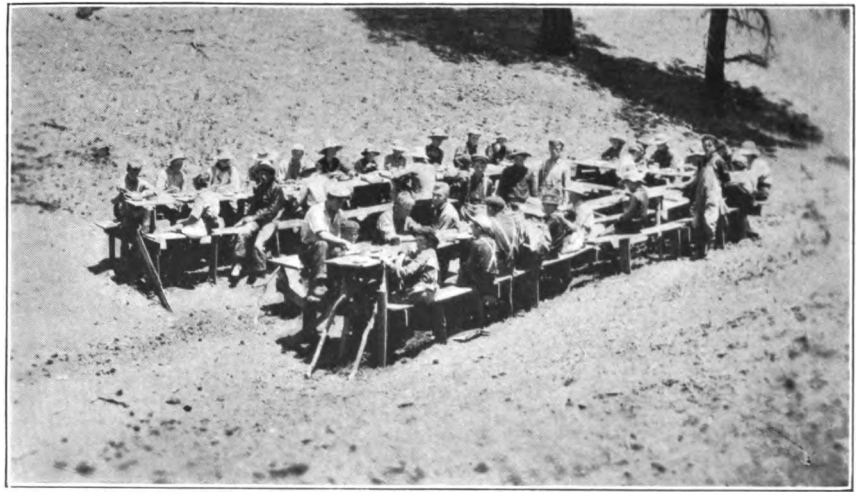

"WE ERECTED OUR ROUGH DINING TABLE"

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the musical bunch, and Tent Four, being filled with all-round experienced campers, withdrew from the common run and pitched their tent on the far side of the stream.

"As near the middle of the camp as possible we erected our rough dining table—building it and the long benches of culls we bought at a neighboring sawmill. It was a work of art, to be sure, but proved to be stout enough to hold many a hearty meal.

"The cook table we built just between two magnificent pines, then the provision tent stood just behind this table.

"Visitors' Day was a great occasion and being reasonably close to the railroad a goodly group of parents spent the day in camp, bringing an unusual number of mysterious boxes of goodies from home along with them.

"In the afternoon we adjourned to the pasture for our athletics and in that way attracted a large part of the Cadets from their camp to watch our festivities.

"It had reached our ears the day before from several sources that the Cadet Camp had been very poorly disciplined and as a result their food supply was just about gone, while only half of their period was up.

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At the afternoon sports the boxes from home were so much in evidence that the Cadets could not help but take notice of them.

"They had been having bacon and beans three times a day for several days, their diet only having variations when they could get down in the Glen to the little store. There, unbeknown to the officers, many boxes of dainty cookies and pies were eaten.

"It so happened that one of the boys in our camp had an older brother in the Cadet camp and it had been rumored about that the reason one boy was in one camp and the other boy in the Cadet camp was because they were boys that could not get along together. Their visiting parents were thus obliged to bring two boxes of goodies, one for each boy.

"It not being Visitors' Day in the Cadet camp, that box of cakes and candy excited not a little bit of envy among the other cadets and brought more than one boy to the sudden realization that he was homesick. The favored Cadet was anything but selfish and passed his box around without restraint until it was all gone. In this way probably twenty Cadets got a taste—just enough to create an appetite for more. Consequently, by

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night a carefully thought-out plan had evolved itself in the minds of a few hungry boys.

" 'Why, there must be at least forty boxes like that one Joe got up in that camp,' said Corporal Knight, 'and it would be the easiest thing agoing to get at least half of them for ourselves.'

"The Cadets, who had been having a whole week of sham battles, had become quite expert in sizing up an enemy's camp and in making a successful attack upon it. So, naturally, among them a plan began to unfold itself.

"After taps it would be easy to slip out past the back picket—perhaps he might even be persuaded to go along—then separate into two parties, one to attack on the north side, create a disturbance, and draw all the campers out to see what the racket was about; and when the tents were all emptied the other squad under Joe, who knew the camp, having had permission to visit his brother several times, would swoop down, make a raid through the tents, gather up the desired boxes of 'good eats,' and make their getaway before the campers returned. It was so easy and no doubt it would work. Any

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little objections that were made by boys whose consciences were overly acute were quickly overruled by the others on the ground that it was just a practical joke and 'no steal at all' and 'then to just think of the eats.'

"Captains for the two squads were chosen and the definite details were being arranged when Joe, suddenly looking up, beheld his father coming around the end of the tent.

"There was a hush and many sly winks, then the Corporal saved the day by blurting out in an animated voice, 'And then it happened this way. He jumped straight up into the air about eight feet, let out a howl like all the Apaches in the Western Hemisphere were after him, then came straight toward the defenceless white man, a dagger in each hand.' The plotters had caught the cue and gave the actor their best attention. Even Joe never looked up.

"Several very foolish questions were then asked about the bloodthirsty Indian and by that time Joe's father had got well into their midst.

" 'Why, hello, Dad!' called Joe in a surprised manner. 'Thought you were up to the Y Camp with James.'

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" 'I was,' replied Mr. Davis, 'but I forgot to leave you money and I thought I'd better drop back this way on our way to the train. You boys getting plenty to eat down here?' There was a smile on his face. 'If they feed you like they do the boys up at the Y Camp you ought to gain twenty pounds apiece before you start home.'

"There were many more sly winks round the group, but Joe was left to answer.

" 'O yes, Dad, they feed us well enough, but say, that box from home was swell.'

" 'You bet it was,' came in a chorus.

" 'I wish my Dad would slip one along to me like that,' said the little Corporal. 'First cake I've had for a week. Gee, but it was good.'

"There was a merry twinkle in Mr. Davis' eye as he bade good-bye to his son Joe. He had been a boy himself not so very long ago and he was too sharp to be easily fooled. He had stood behind the tent and heard the whole plan for the raid and secretly had wished he might stay and see the fun; in fact, if he had told his innermost heart, he would have had to confess that he would have even enjoyed having a hand in the fracas. It would be like some of the water-

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melon raids he had taken part in in his early boyhood days back on the old farm.

"James was, of course, at the station to see his folks off, along with many of the other boys, and it was lucky for the Y Camp that he was, for Mr. Davis had confided what he had heard to his good wife and she in turn, mother like, and not having the slightest idea of tangling up affairs, mentioned to James confidentially that they were liable to have midnight visitors at camp that night.

"James was notorious for having a keen imagination, and this powerful seed, planted carelessly by his mother, grew with surprising rapidity until long before the tired group of Y Campers had again reached Camp, James had told his secret (under solemn promise to keep it to themselves) to no less than a dozen of his companions, coloring it with all the strength of his wild imagination.

" 'Yes, fifty Cadets, with loaded guns, will charge the camp at exactly twelve tonight and will demand hands up. When the entire camp is lined up in a long line, shivering in their pajamas, their hands held high in air, each boy looking straight into the gleaming barrel of a Krag-Jorgensen, the other squad

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will sack the camp, capture the grub tent and then disappear in the darkness. That's what mother told me, anyway,' said James with an air of great mystery, 'but she told me not to tell, so don't you say a word. But say, I've got a great scheme how three or four of us can sneak out, waylay the entire army of 'tins' and put them to shameful rout with nothing but our water guns. But mind, don't tell a soul.'

"No one told anyone except their very closest pal and so by night only about nine-tenths of the Y Campers had an inkling that something unusual was going to happen that night.

"The Chief had no less than twenty versions of the planned raid and was quite undecided whether to pay any attention to the matter or not. One thing decided him. He knew the Cadets were awfully careless with their guns and the mortal dread of an accident drove him to take at least a few precautions.

"Consequently, at the camp fire that evening, the Chief made a few remarks—leaving out every semblance of interest or excitement —about the possibility of a few of the Cadets coming up to scare them in the night,

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never mentioning a word about the boxes of goodies from home. But as he talked James nudged George and Al whispered to Tommie, and so on around the circle. Every boy was tingling with excitement and not a few felt just a little bit afraid.

" 'Now, we'll leave it this way, so no one need be frightened,' said the Chief. 'In case they should come they would probably attack from that heavy grove of young aspens just along the stream. So if you hear one stroke of the dinner bell in the night assemble at the cook tent as quickly as possible. We will all be together if there is to be a rough-house. But, confidentially, I don't believe they will come near.'

"The group broke up to go to their tents and once there a very lively discussion broke out as to details and each boy gave his ideas of the whole affair. When quiet was finally secured each boy lay wide awake thinking the matter over. The stream sounded unusually loud. Even the crickets in the grass made a really startling noise.

"James shivered with delight as he snuggled down in the blanket, for all this excitement was of his making and someway he already felt himself a hero for having found

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out the great secret and saved the camp the humility of a defeat at the hands of the Cadets.

"'Gee whillikens, wouldn't Joe punch me some if he knew I knew all about it?' he thought. 'But we'll fool 'em right, that's sure. Won't they feel cheap coming away up here in the dead of night and then find us all out waiting for them? Why, we'll scare them to death. Perhaps we'll capture them and tie them to trees and throw hatchets at them like the Indians do, or hang them up by their thumbs, or—or—' and so his imagination went on until sleep overtook him and then he dreamed of strange battles and in them all he, James, was the great leader and hero.

"The Chief, after making sure the camp was quiet, took two of the choice older fellows with him, each one carrying his own blankets, and the three slowly made their way down the valley to the pasture. The Cadets would have to come that way if they came at all, and if they did come the Chief proposed to make them believe he was one of their own picket guards and order them to halt. If they refused he would shoot once or twice into the air. The shooting would

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arouse the Cadet officers and the culprits would be caught. In this way he would save a scene at the camp.

"The three chuckled to themselves as they reached the pasture, chose a good sheltered place, and lay down to watch. Two hundred yards away lay the Cadet Camp from which came merry voices.

" 'By the great horned spoon,' ejaculated Joe when his father was well out of hearing. 'That was a close call, and say, Thorp, you're a peach at getting out of a tight scrape. That Indian stuff was great. Wish I could think as quickly as you can, old boy.'

" 'So do I,' snorted the other would-be captain, 'but mind me, old boy, you'll get caught yet some day and then, O my, I do feel sorry for you.'

"It was just eleven when from out of the darkness came the fateful 'Who goes there?' The Cadets nudged each other in surprise, for they had supposedly arranged with that very sentinel just after supper to let them by, and in return he was to have his pick from among the spoils, but Fate had taken a

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hand and at the last moment sentinels had been changed. It was an officer who had given the order. At that moment he flashed his flashlight, drew his sword, and advanced rapidly. The dismayed raiders broke and ran in every direction.

"'Halt!' rang out the officer, but he might as well have ordered the winds to stop blowing. The boys knew he would not shoot and the only thing now was to keep from being caught. In a surprisingly short time every raider was in bed (some with their clothes on) and quiet reigned in camp.

"Not so, however, in the pasture, for the Chief had been suddenly awakened by the breaking of branches, accompanied by a dull tread in the aspen grove behind him. He rose quickly, became intensely alert, then was suddenly disgusted with himself. The Cadets had passed him. He had been so tired that he had not heard them, and now they were safely on their way toward the camp. What was worse, they were between him and camp, just how far ahead he couldn't tell, but he could hear the breaking twigs and the tramp of many feet. He thought he heard a giggle, and it made him angry.

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"He turned and awoke his sleeping companions, then told them in hushed tones just what had happened. They were outwitted. That was plain to be seen. What were they to do? They stood looking at each other through sleepy eyes, each expecting the other to answer.

" 'I have it,' said the Chief suddenly, 'let's rush them in the rear. I'll shoot into the air several times and they will think they are found out and that the officers are after them. They will break and run. We can then sneak into camp, arouse the leaders and be ready for them. Are you game? Then come on.'

"They tossed their blankets into the bushes and started forward at a trot. One of the fellows tripped and sprawled headlong in the dark, but was soon up again and following.

"There was no mistaking it. They could hear the limbs breaking and the tramp of many feet, for the night was absolutely quiet and their every sense was now alert. After a half hour's maneuvering they suddenly came near to the sounds, and, fearing an ambush, the Chief let out a blood curdling yell that made the shivers run up and down his own back, and at the same time shot once

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into the air. It had the desired result. There was a great rush, twigs broke, limbs swished, and it sounded much as if fifty men had broken into a run and scattered in every direction.

"The three stopped breathless. The running seemed to go mostly to their right until it was far, far away, and then it died out entirely.

" 'We did the trick,' whispered the Chief. 'Now, let's détour and make for camp. They may rally and try anyway. They could sneak right into camp through those woods.'

"Suiting the action to the words, they started, and after an hour's stumbling and hurrying they arrived at the edge of their own camp, only to see a lantern lighted and setting on the table. The other leaders then had heard the noise, or perhaps the shot, and were ready. What would they think when they found the Chief was gone, for he had told no one of his little plan.

"Cautiously they entered camp and approached the light only to find their faithful cook nodding against a tree, a club in his hand. The Chief quietly blew out the lantern and the three sat down to listen and to wait.

"They were so wide awake now that it was

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not difficult to watch. A half-dozen times they thought they heard the tramp, tramp again, or the snap of a twig, or a clatter as if someone had tripped and fallen, but always it was far, far away.

"At last they began to drowse, and probably would have fallen asleep if it hadn't been for a funny little incident that occurred at that moment.

"Jack Sprat, the fattest of the two fatties, suddenly rose from the ground in front of his tent and after a long-drawn yawn and painful stretch he calmly leaned over and pounded his fat companion in the ribs, whispering in a hoarse whisper, 'Hey, you, Jake, wake up. It's your turn to watch now. I've been watching for two hours.' The Chief just caught his giggle and the others hugged themselves with delight while they waited for Jake to reply.

" 'Quit punching me in the ribs, you fat pork,' grunted Jake sleepily. 'You ain't either been watching two hours yet, for we've only been to bed about thirty minutes. Gee, I wish they'd come. I want to go to sleep.' With that Jake's cot squeaked violently under the shifting load and Jake went to sleep.

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"Jack Sprat murmured something about being 'about froze' and 'blooming nonsense,' and then his cot also squeaked dangerously, followed by a peaceful quiet except for a few snores.

"An hour passed and not a sound; two hours, two and a half—and then the Chief whispered to his companions, 'Jack Sprat has the right notion about the business. Let's go to bed. The excitement's all over.' They obeyed without urging and in half a moment were asleep themselves, all three.

"But not for long. 'Clang!' went the dinner bell, just one awful ring that seemed to echo and re-echo down the canyon. Every camper sat upright in bed as if by magic and blinked uncertainly, each boy wondering if he had been dreaming, but seeing all the others also sitting up, they understood it was the signal. The Cadets were coming and the fight would be on in a few moments.

"Some fumbled at boot strings with sleepy fingers. Some tried to put sweaters on backwards, and one had tried in vain to put his legs through his coat sleeves. Then they began to pour out—six, seventeen, thirty-eight lads—big, little, fat, thin, dressed, undressed; excited, frightened lead-

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ers in pajamas and in bathrobes—they were all there, and among them the Chief.

"He was straining his ears for the approaching sound. Yes, there it was, coming nearer and nearer, right through the woods as he prophesied.

" 'Tackle low, fellows, and don't fight unless you have to,' was his advice. 'I don't believe they will attack when they see we are waiting for them.'

"They waited expectantly, eager, ready. The leaders in the lead, the little fellows, except a few, well at the back. Si, the old chef, with a goodly aspen club, stood by the door of the cook tent. Closer and closer came the snapping and the tramp, slow and measured.

"The Chief was thinking fast. He wanted to get just one of those Cadets. Just one, all by himself, and tie him up for evidence. He had it all arranged in his mind, and he wondered if he'd know the lad.

"The very first streaks of dawn lighted up the eastern sky. The snapping came very close, and then—to the great surprise of all—a dozen range cattle sauntered out of the woods and stood staring at the strange spectacle.

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"A wild shout went up from the besieged army, all but James joined in, and he was keenly disappointed, for he so desired to distinguish himself in the awful conflict—that fight that was of his own clever making."

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STORY FOUR

BURNED OUT BY FOREST FIRE

"THAT's the most glorious camp fire I've sat by this season," said Jed with an approving nod, as he watched the hungry flames leap and bound into the sky, scattering a great shower of playful sparks on the group of campers gathered by it.

"That fire was properly put together, that's sure. Just see how the draught sucks in about those big logs and carries the long yellow tongues up those dry, pitch-soaked limbs. You know, fellows, there is a miniature forest fire all in itself, and from it you can catch something of the grandeur of say twenty square miles of burning pine woods."

"Did you ever see a real forest fire, Jed? One that was burning uncontrolled and eating the country clean as it passed?" asked one interested camper.

"Oh, yes," replied Jed as he turned to see

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the firelight play on the wall of dark spruce that lay just behind him. "Oh, yes. I've seen two or three, and each as different from the other as you could well imagine. One was on a very heavily wooded mountain, with a powerful gale blowing. It resembled a prairie fire, only the dry grass was green trees sixty feet high. My, how it hissed and glared and raged in that gale, the black billows of tar smoke rising and blacking the sky until folks fifty miles away smelled it and saw it hang like great storm clouds in the sky.

"Another time I watched one, from a safe distance, you may be sure, struggling with a heavy thunder shower. The rain fell in floods and the long zigzag flashes of lightning fairly ripped the sky. The rain made the smoke hang low, but every here and there a brilliant blue flame would burst forth and you could hear the creak of falling timbers and crackle of burning brands, only to be drowned a moment later in the hoarse rumble and rattle of the thunder. I had a splendid pair of field glasses, and as I watched the fire eat farther and farther up the mountain, suddenly an immense buck emerged from the timber and walked out on a towering pin-

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nacle of rock to gaze at the seething furnace below him. He sniffed the air as if determining how long before it would reach him, then, as if persuaded he must hurry, he turned and was gone."

"Jed, didn't your camp burn up in a forest fire once," asked an eager-faced boy close by his side.

Jed chuckled at the remembrance, then suddenly became reflective as he spoke. "Yes, Cabbie, it did, and came very near getting your Uncle Dudley in a bad scrape. That was three years ago, when Jim Long and I 'packed it' into the Goose Creek country, but I shall never forget it, that's sure."

"Tell us about it, Jed," begged Cabbie, his face so earnest and his eyes so wide that Jed couldn't resist.

He had just begun when there was a wild scramble and muffled roar, a million tiny sparks, and the burning tepee of logs lurched to one side and slowly toppled over.

"It was just getting into a comfortable position to hear that story," laughed Cabbie. "Now, it's ready, Jed. Go ahead. So are we."

Jed began.

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"Jim Long and I were old cronies and had tramped and cooked and slept together on every mountain within hiking distance of Pikes Peak. One evening, just at twilight, as the sun was setting behind the beautiful Sangre-de-Cristo range, Jim looked at me, out of half-closed eyelids, with that far-away quizzical look of his, pointing his finger at the setting sun (we were then on top of bald old Mount Rosa), and said, 'Jed, I've had the "going fever" so bad of late I can't sleep nights. I'm restless and I'm off my feed. I need a journey, a regular care-free, come-and-go-as-you-please trip, away over yonder where the sun spends the night.'

"I looked at him, kind of amused, for I understood that spell, and if I had been honest I would have had to confess that I too was hankering for just that sort of thing.

" 'You know, Jed,' he continued, 'there must be valleys and canyons over there that no white man has ever trod, where the trees are ten feet through and the trout have never seen a fly. Back, Jed, where the deer have never smelled a camp fire and where the squirrels and jays are thicker than spatter on the mill pond.'

" 'Yes, Jim,' I said, warming up to the

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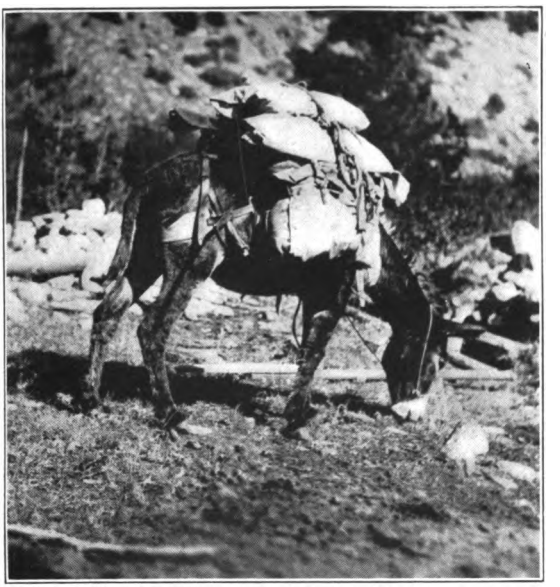

"OUR ENTIRE OUTFIT WAS PACKED ON TWO DEPENDABLE OLD BURROS"

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proposition at once, 'there must be such places. Let's go and take a look at them.' So it was arranged that night there on top of old Rosa that we should go, and as we sat we worked out the details of our first pack trip far back into the 'Great Silent Places.'

"We traveled four weeks, our entire outfit securely packed on two dependable old burros, every day finding us deeper and deeper in the Rockies.

"We passed fewer ranches, saw fewer cattle, and the roads dwindled down to mere cow paths following the line of least resistance, and still we tramped on. 'Contentment' had made her camp with us and 'Complete Satisfaction' dined at our simple table three times a day. We forgot the civilization we had left behind us and seemed to be following a great desire that led ever deeper and deeper into old Mother Nature's heart.

"Well I remember the first whole day that we saw no human dwelling or saw no man save ourselves. The country was a veritable garden and the air as pure and as untainted as if it had never been breathed.

"That night we built our camp in a beautiful green meadow and lighted our fire on a little high knoll of sod, then sat down to

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listen to the wild music of the meadow larks, to which the stream of crystal water hummed a soft accompaniment.

"Our kettle sang merrily on the fire and Jim's batch of biscuits (made from the very last flour we had) were just browning as I declared my squirrel stew finished. We dished it up on our aluminum plates and sat down to eat, when a great buck, two does and two fawns emerged from the low cedar thicket to our right and stood watching us, uncertain. It was a beautiful picture, the gently waving grass, the long thin column of smoke, the purple forest, and the deer, while tier upon tier of ragged crag-crowned mountains faded away in the distance.

"I suppose we would have become so charmed with our nomadic life that we might never have come back again if it hadn't been for a strange lot of experiences that began to befall us that same evening.

"We were still sitting by our little friendship fire, half dozing, when suddenly we heard a sharp, weird laugh somewhere out in the darkness. It was almost a snarl as I think of it now. We got to our feet in a second and beheld one of the strangest sights I ever expect to see.

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"Coming straight toward us, at a slow, loose, shambling gait, was an old, old man, his clothes ragged and dirty, his long gray unkempt hair hanging about his heavily bearded face. Two small black eyes burned beneath shaggy eyebrows, and in his hand he carried a shotgun much like they used fifty years ago.

"We stood transfixed and so taken by surprise that we said not a word and never thought once of our own guns.

"The old man came straight toward us, while now and then he'd laugh that dry, hard little cackle, much like dry leaves blowing in the woods. Then he'd wave his free arm threateningly in the air and mutter half aloud sentences.

"At last he spoke, in slow, high-pitched tones, every word fraught with a hatred he could not conceal even from the first.

"'So ye have come back, have ye,' he snorted. 'By the Eternal Gods, I hope some mighty crag from thet there rib o' Nature will roll upon you this very night and crush ye where ye sleep.'

"He spread his arms as if calling down upon our innocent heads all the vengeance of time, past and present, and then, as if re-

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lieved by his spasm of hatred, he continued, his voice shaking and his hands trembling.

" 'I've feared the hour would come when you cowards would return again to infest this quiet valley with your vile explosions and kill with your wicked firearms. Yew weren't satisfied to rob and kill and damn, to burn and steal—no, yew must come again to repeat yer acts of long ago, and may God Almighty strike yew with the fever, poison the very waters you drink, and at last consume your bones in the Eternal Fires of Torment, for what you have brought to this old life of mine. May yew suffer ten times over the pain and anguish you have brought into this peaceful valley.'

"He turned, a great sob shaking his bent old frame, and again he shambled into the woods and was gone.

"Jim looked at me. I looked at Jim. Then we both laughed, but not a happy laugh, for we were really frightened.

" 'Well, this is interesting,' said Jim slowly. 'He cursed us roundly, didn't he? He looks like a bit of the long, long ago for sure, and he certainly has a deep-seated grudge for someone, I judge from his feeble remarks.'

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"'He evidently thinks we are someone with whom he has had dealings that weren't entirely satisfactory before,' I replied. 'And we thought we were getting to where there had been no white men before us. Why, Jimmie, that old codger has been here at least a century, and thinks he owns this valley.'

"We finished our suppers, carefully picketed our burros, and crawled into bed, for we had come many a weary mile that day and we were tired out.

"Jim wakened me in the morning with a roar of rage. Crawling to the tent flap, I raised it and looked out. Jim was holding an indignant conversation with himself when I interrupted, 'What's up, Jimmie, old boy?'

"'Up!' he roared. 'That old spalpeen has appropriated both our burros, picket ropes, pins and all. Here we are, a thousand miles from civilization, our grub gone and no pack mules. Oh, you old white-haired lunatic, let me get a-hold of you and I'll make you sit up and wonder who I am. I——'

"'Calm yourself, Jimmie,' I said good-naturedly. 'It was only yesterday you were wishing you'd never have to go back to the city again. So now, just get busy and be-

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gin to think up a few of those "Robinson Crusoe" stunts before we starve.'

" 'Starve nothing,' he retorted. 'I'm going to hunt that old galoot up after breakfast and fulfil all the things he expects of us both, and if he doesn't cough up those pack mules before I call ten, he's going to remember this beautiful fall day for the next one hundred years.' With that he set about getting a bite to eat, and in a half-hour we were off together, guns in hand, to search for our stolen stock and incidentally to pay our compliments to our new friend—if he could be found.

"We went through the timber where he had disappeared the night before and soon found his track. We walked fast and in twenty minutes we came to a little open valley in which stood a tumbled-down log shanty just at the edge of a grove of Engleman spruce. Off to one side stood two good-sized hay stacks and a makeshift barn.

"We made straight for the house, and I must confess we were a little frightened, but we were on serious business and must trust to our guns for protection in case of trouble. As we neared the shack Jim's wrath turned to a hearty laugh as he caught sight of a

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neat little white sign nailed to a tree just by the side of the door. It informed all curious people that this was the home of Doctor Duncan, Nerve Specialist. The absolute foolishness of the thing burst in upon us and we just howled. Could this be our friend's shack?

"There was a squeaking of hinges, a shuffle of feet, and the venerable doctor himself put in his appearance. We had apparently aroused him from his slumbers and he had hastened out without taking time to even dress.

"Jim took the lead.

" 'Say, old boy, we want our donkeys, and we want them quick. Where are they?' He raised his gun to strengthen his demand, but it was needless, for the doctor had suddenly disappeared. The door slammed, there was a sound of sliding bolts, and that was all.

" 'Watch out for a shot from some window,' I cautioned Jim, but Jim was mad.

" 'Shot,' he snorted, as he kicked at the door, 'that old duck couldn't hit a balloon from inside of one. Come, let's rush the back door.'

"Jim started and I followed. We jammed it wide open and entered. There were two

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rooms, and as the doctor wasn't in the first one the conclusion was he must be in the other, so in we went, only to find it empty. We were about to retreat when the doctor suddenly appeared from behind a pile of wood in the corner and fell on his knees before us, begging for mercy.

"'Let me live,' he begged. 'You have taken all—all but my miserable old life. Now spare that, for the sake of the old times. I gave you all—all, even her, and in return you lied, always lied. You burned my barns, you burned my home, you took her life. Take the mines, take the ore I have already sacked, but give me my life.' He sobbed as if his heart would break.

"'We don't want your mines, we don't want your life,' said Jim, his voice a little softened. 'All we want is our donkeys and to be let alone. We are not robbers or thieves, just peaceful campers.'

"A change came over the old Doctor in an instant. 'Donkeys,' he echoed. 'Donkeys, why—why—they all starved to death—after you left. I told you that before. I had no hay, no grain. The snow was very deep and it was so cold.' The old man shivered in memory of it. 'They grew thin—and died.'

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Then his face brightened. 'But I will pay, say ten dollars apiece for them or more.' He spoke eagerly.

"Jim looked at me and I looked at Jim, and I was about to speak when a full round bray broke on the morning air and the old man jumped to his feet in great excitement. That sound seemed to rouse dormant memories, for his face twitched nervously and he appeared surprised.

"We turned, and there at the end of one of the old hay stacks stood our two donkeys and a lean bony horse, their ears up, they had heard our voices.

"The old man did not seem to appreciate what we told him just then, but watched us in an absent-minded way as we took the two beasts and started for our camp. All the while he seemed to be trying to recollect a lost thought.

" 'Jim,' I said when we were well out of sight, 'we got out of that easy. That old boy's as crazy as a loon, and the sooner we get out of his locality the better for us. He's liable to take a pot shot at us any moment, and getting shot with that old gun would be just like getting hit with a cannon.'

"We packed up our belongings and jour-

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neyed up the valley past the old doctor's, and shouted a good-bye to him as he stood at the door, gun in hand, evidently on guard so as to not be caught napping again.

" 'Watch out for fires, the fires that consume the earth,' the old doctor called as we passed, and then disappeared inside.

" 'I'd like to know his story,' I said to Jim, and we trudged on up the canyon.

"Toward noon we came to Tarry-all, a beautiful stream that flowed into the upper Platte, and soon began to see unmistakable evidences of placer mining. By and by we came to some of the old sluices and the water wheel. It was a beautiful spot, and as there were hundreds of dead cedars that would make incomparable firewood, we decided to pitch a camp and do some fishing.

"With the old planks and boards from the sluices we arranged an aristocratic camp and settled down again for a few days of comfort. Before long we discovered that the fishing was great and our dreams of getting into uninhabited country seemed about to be coming true, when something happened.

"Now, Jim was a crank on camp equipment, and always took with him on every trip a few pet articles that to his mind were

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absolutely indispensable to happiness, although more times than once these very same articles were never taken from his duffle bag until he returned home again.

"On this particular trip, however, the above-mentioned indispensable articles happened to be a new-fangled combination gas lantern and magnifying glass which set up on a neat aluminum tripod and that made, beyond any doubt, a very handy camp light. The other was a complicated flashlight gun that carried a dozen charges of powerful powder and fed them into the flash-pan automatically. If one was interested in photographing animals or birds at night it was a very clever device, and above all things that Jim was interested in, it was animal photography.

"As was Jim's custom, after camp was made, he set up his lantern and got it all ready to light when evening should come, even to opening the powerful bull's-eye so as to expose the burner, and then hung his camera and flash gun on a handy limb of a low-hanging dead cedar where he could get it on an instant's notice.

"Camp all arranged, we set out together to catch a string of trout for our evening

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meal, and as the country was so wild and beautiful, we wandered on and on, losing track of miles and time, only keeping tab of the splendid catch and glorying in such life in the open. Noon found us before a tiny fire, frying trout on hot stones for our dinner. It was late summer and here and there a bush of red raspberries was still to be found. These we munched upon as we passed. I remember that the sun in the open was very warm, but that back in the still green shadows life was delightful.

"We had gone straight up stream and along in the afternon we began to realize that a strong wind had arisen. Knowing it was likely to bring rain, we decided to start back. But Jim had discovered a splendid quiet pool, and, having landed three speckled beauties, was loath to leave it.

"As we sat thus contented there wandered up the valley on the breeze a faint, very faint odor of smoke. I noticed it, but having cooked by a camp fire every day for a month, I thought very little of it. In fact, I hardly gave it a thought.

"In a few moments it came again, only stronger. Jim caught a good whiff of it and suddenly pulled in his line.

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"'Smoke,' he said surprisedly. 'From where, pray tell. We left no fire in camp.'

"'No fire,' I echoed, 'that's so, we didn't.'

"Jim looked frightened and I said to him, 'Why, did you never smell smoke before? Where have you been the last four weeks?'

"He became impatient. 'Smoke yes, I've smelled it, but we are in uninhabited country, man, except for that old crazy loon down the canyon. That isn't his smoke, though. The wind is wrong for it. It's from down the valley.'

"I looked Jim in the eye. 'Do you suppose that old codger might——' 'Of course he might,' cried Jim. 'It would be just like him—a gale like this. Man, if he did, it will wipe out this whole canyon.'

"We were running now as fast as the tangled underbrush would permit, and every step the smoke came stronger and stronger. As we got into the open canyon I saw Jim toss his bag of fish and his rod and reel into some bushes, blazing them well so he could find them later, then off came his hat and sweater. I did likewise, and we started off down the canyon at a dead run.

"'This canyon's on fire,' panted Jim, after we had gone on half an hour. 'I hear the

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flames.' We stopped short and listened. There was no mistaking it. A mighty fire was raging somewhere below us.

"Another ten moments and the air became foul with smoke. The wind had increased and against it we made our way slowly.

"Suddenly Jim grabbed me by the arm and looked me in the eye. 'Jed,' he said, 'can you swim?' I said, 'Yes. Why?'

" 'Because,' he panted, 'we are hemmed in. That cliff's on one side, the river on the other, and the strip between is burning. It's our only choice. We'd better not waste any time.'

"We hurried to the river, but found only rapids, fierce, hungry eddies, and the water as cold as ice. There was absolutely no chance, so we hurried on, forgetting we were tired.

"We could hear the flames crackle now and the smoke nearly blinded us. We went again to the river and found it better.

"Jim waded out and called to me to follow. I did and soon we were swimming side by side in the cold current.

" 'We ought to have cooled off a bit first,' said Jim through chattering teeth. 'I'm getting the cramps.'

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"'Cramps,' I called desperately. 'Don't, Jim, for goodness' sake. Let's take it slower.'

"After a desperate struggle—we'll never know just how desperate—we reached the other shore, and such a sight as we beheld. It made us forget we were cold or wet or fagged nearly to the end. We forgot our camp, our donkeys, our bag of fish, but just sat in wide-eyed wonderment before a seething, roaring sea of flame of every color of the rainbow. We saw a multitude of birds fly out over the river. We saw the ashes settling on the water. We felt tiny, so small that in that hour we were negligible. Century upon century of mighty pines withered and died, their sacrificed bodies only creating the heat to destroy their neighbors.

"When the wonder of it all had subsided we roused ourselves to our situation. Camp lay at least a mile below us yet, and then we must again swim that mountain torrent to reach it. We were both thinking the same thoughts.

"'The poor beasts,' sighed Jim. 'I tied them so securely.'

"'Jim,' I said, 'do you honestly believe that that old Doc Duncan would do a trick

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like that? What would he do it for, anyway?'

"'Why, just to get rid of us, boy. Isn't that reason enough? Or perhaps to get our donkeys—then try to make us believe they burned——'

"'But, Jim,' I protested, 'it's a penitentiary offense to maliciously set fire to the forest.'

"Jim exploded. He was completely out of patience with me for defending the old man.

"'Well, then, who did set the fire? Tell me that, can you?' he demanded. 'We haven't seen a man now for three days but that old Doc. I'd never have thought of his doing it if he had not given us that song and dance last night and then stolen our animals.'

"We were opposite the camp site now and could see very clearly across the river. It was enough to make your heart sad within you. The camp was gone, absolutely wiped out so far as we could see, and the truth flashed home. The fire had started just at our camp and we had left no fire of any sort. There was but one answer. Doc Duncan had burned us out.

"'Well, no doubt he has two good rifles

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and a complete camp equipment, besides two donkeys,' said Jim bitterly. 'The old blatherskite! You wait until I get my hands on him.'

" 'But, Jim, suppose he's gone,' I said, for the idea suddenly came to me.

"Jim looked disappointed, but our conversation was interrupted here by a shout from the other side. To our utter amazement, there was the old Doc, sitting straddle his bony mare and in his hand he held the two picket ropes while the donkeys stood looking on.

"We could not hear what he was saying, but he was very much excited, that was evident.

" 'Shall we swim over, Jed?' asked Jim, and without answering I waded in and began to paddle, but it was slow work, for we were completely tired out.

"The old man, when he saw what we were up to, dismounted, tied the picket ropes together and stood ready to throw a helping hand if it was needed.

"It was needed, for when I next opened my eyes I lay on a bed of boughs near the burned camp and Jim was bending eagerly over me. Doc Duncan was heating his own

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old ragged coat before a fire he had kicked together, and soon he wrapped me in it. I swooned again and did not come to until I heard a strange voice talking in a loud, brusk manner.

" 'What the devil does this mean, boys? Some more careless camp fires, I suppose. Well, you have burned fifty thousand dollars' worth of timber already, and nothing under heaven but a change of wind or a torrent can check that monster now.' Then I slipped back to sleep again.

"When I awoke again I heard a number of men talking, and Jim was explaining the situation and giving his reasons why he believed Doc Duncan had set the fire.

"The fire warden listened patiently, for Jim was telling a straightforward tale, and his years of toil on the range had taught him patience and self-control.

" 'No, sir, there was not a spark of fire here when we left, and we have seen no man for three days but Doc Duncan, and he called after us early this morning as we passed his place, "Look out for the fires—the fires that consume the earth," then he disappeared indoors.'

"The warden was puzzled and then he be-

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gan to briefly tell us about old Doc. How he had been a patient, kindly old fellow that had brought a sick wife he idolized out into that country for her health. In a few years prospectors came and staked placer claims, worked all the summer and then left all their property in Doc's care for the winter while they returned to the city.

"The winter was a hard one, and all the animals the miners left died. In the spring, when they came to work the claims again, they demanded the settlement, and Doc, being unable to pay, a fight followed. They burned the old man's barns and haystacks, burned the little cabin the Doc had built with his own hands, and in the grim fight that followed the doctor's wife was accidentally killed. The miners, realizing they were in serious trouble, pulled up stakes and left the country, never to return again.

" 'The old man brooded over his loss until he partially lost his mind, and he has feared prospectors and fire ever since like grim death itself. That's why I can't understand his doing a trick like this unless——'

" 'But,' added the warden after a pause, 'I didn't believe the old man was vicious. I've stayed with him many a night on my rounds

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over the range, and he has always been queer but sociable, and often very sensible. But as for his stealing your donkeys, I don't believe he did it. I'll tell you what really happened. A donkey is the most lonesome animal that lives, and some time in the night they scented that old barn or heard Doc's horse whinny. They simply pulled stakes and came over for a visit. My horse has done the same thing many a time.'

"'Well, someone set that fire,' added one of the assistant wardens. 'Now, who did it? That's the question. That canyon had the finest grove of red cedar and spruce in it of any canyon in the Reserve, and we ought to establish the blame.'

"The head warden turned and said, 'Johnnie, hop on your nag and go get the old Doc, and we'll mighty soon find out if he's guilty. He'll not lie to me, looking in the end of a six-shooter.'

"There was a sharp clatter of hoofs and the assistant was gone. Soon he returned, old Doc riding at his side.

"The warden did the talking. 'Doc, there is some mystery about how this fire started.' He pulled his gun quietly and laid it across the horn of his saddle. 'Did you say any-

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thing about fire to these boys as they passed you this morning?'

"The old man looked frightened, his lips quivered as he pulled his dirty beard meditatively. 'Yes, George, I did. I warned these very fellows about fire.' The words came slowly.

" 'Doc, when did you come to this camp first today? Be very careful now.' He moved the gun carelessly.

" 'When I saw the smoke, George, rising in great clouds. I came fast, but could do nothing. The whole valley was burning, burning—God, man, just like it did up the other valley when they burned my barns and haystacks. I begged them to spare me, a homeless old man that wanted nothing but to live.' The old man was growing excited now and his arms were waving wildly as he went on only half coherently.

" 'But you misunderstand me, Doc,' said the warden in a cool, low voice. 'These boys believe *you* set this fire today to burn them out, and if you did you know the penalty.'

"The old man was suddenly struck dumb. He looked, speechless, from one to the other, his whole frame quivering, his eyes burning under their white lashes.

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"'George, before God Almighty, I never did it.' Then he broke into great sobs.

"'Doc, I believe you,' and the warden slipped his gun back into its holster and extended his hand to the sobbing man.

"'Boys, our answer is somewhere else. Let's find it.'

"Then we were cross-examined, but answered all questions apparently satisfactorily, yet without shedding the slightest bit of light.

"'Might have been lightning,' suggested one.

"'Strange lightning would have hit this very camp spot,' replied the warden.

"'Still those guns might have drawn it,' replied the assistant. 'You mind the time——' The warden motioned him to silence as he continued to ask questions.

"'Boys, did you have any explosives in camp except gun shells?' he asked pointedly.

"'No, sir,' promptly replied Jim, 'we did not.'

"'Why, yes, Jim, there was that flash powder,' I said softly.

"'Oh, yes, sir,' corrected Jim. 'There was flash powder, but it is not explosive except when fire is set to it.'

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" 'Where was it?' demanded the warden.

"Jim explained carefully, and as he talked his heart sank with misgivings, for as sure as fate that forest fire started at the very tree where his new flash gun hung. The wind had taken the fire from that point only, while nothing on this side of that cedar tree had burned.

" 'Ah, ha,' said the warden. 'Perhaps we have a clue. Now, what could possibly have set that powder off? As I understand it, it does create an intense heat when once exploded. Let me see, the tree was a dead cedar, was it not, with the needles still clinging and very dry? Of course, nothing more inflammable grows than a dead dry cedar. Now, what could have—see here, what's this?' The warden stooped and picked up the burned remains of Jim's new lantern. 'A lantern, hey. Well, well! Was it lighted?'

" 'No, sir,' quickly replied Jim. 'It has never been lighted. It was brand new.'

" 'Never been lighted?' questioned the warden.

" 'No, sir. It was just an emergency lantern and has never been lighted.'

"Doc Duncan was examining it carefully

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and soon had it standing again on the now ruined tripod. The lens was still whole, and as he wiped the smoke and ashes from it he remarked about its unusual thickness.

"The warden was lost in thought. When he spoke it was with great gravity.

" 'My boy, do you remember if you left that lantern open when you went fishing?'

" 'Yes, sir, I did,' replied Jim, 'all ready to light,' not following the warden's thoughts.

" 'Well, sir, strange as it may seem, it's almost incredible, but I believe this is the solution. The sun shining through that heavy lens unfortunately came to a focus just on your loaded flash-gun. The heat thus generated caused it to explode, setting the dry cedar afire. Then followed the fire.'

"It was so simple that we were forced to accept it.

"Jim began to sob until the warden spoke kindly to him.

" 'It's not your fault, my boy. It's one of those can't-be-helped-now things, but a most remarkable incident. I absolve you from any fault, but a most remarkable incident.' "

The camp fire had burned very low, and

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as Jed heaved a long sigh he was suddenly stormed with questions from every side. But his only answer was, "No more tonight, boys. More another time. Let's turn in. I'm sleepy."

"Good night, Jed," came in a chorus.

"Good night, boys."

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STORY FIVE

TO THE RESCUE

"LET's camp right here," said Boots wearily. "I couldn't walk another half-mile tonight if you'd give me fame and fortune. O me, O my!" And he stretched himself at full length on the smooth, hard surface.

"Me for some supper and that at once," chirped "Redhead." "My stomach thinks my throat's cut. Come on, bunch, let's rustle a few splinters and get that coffee pot to boiling."

"That's the caper," joined in the Chief. "Let's have a rouser, too. Away up here on this old bald crag it will seem great. Some pull, eh? Biggest ten miles my hind legs have traveled in some time."

The long line of twenty stalwart campers were releasing themselves from the long rope that had joined them together—three paces apart—on the night's journey up a steep,

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slippery ribbon of a trail, hardly more than a cowpath.

"There would have been more than one barked shin if it hadn't been for that rope, too," said Collins as he loosed it from the fastening at his belt. "First time I have ever tramped that way, but for such mountain climbing, especially at night, it's a great stunt."

"We go up Pikes Peak that way every year," added Jed, "and we have had some great experiences with our old rope. I'll have to tell you about some of them some time."

In an incredibly short time a merry blaze was sending out its tongues of yellow light and casting strange, irregular shadows on the wind-carved sandstone cliffs about them. The coffee pot soon began to sing while twenty cuts of beefsteak sizzled and sputtered over the hot coals. Here and there a tired, hungry lad munched at a slice of dry bread or sampled his can of baked beans, unable to wait longer for his meat to cook.

"Well, sir, we are actually on top of the Devil's Head," said Boots with a great sigh of satisfaction, "and believe me, boys, the old Demon has some head. Jack had it sized up

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just right, I think, for he says climbing it reminds him of an ant climbing up a woodpile, 'up two steps and slide back three.'" So the merry chatter went on between mouths full of food that was eaten ravenously.

The boys were on their three-day hike from Camp and had reached the summit on schedule time, warm and tired, to be sure, hungry and muscle sore, but with happy hearts and joyous faces, for it was considered a great feat to be able to scale the Devil's Head in one night.

Supper over, the circle gathered closer in about the fire, begging Jed for just one good story before they should roll up, each in his own blanket, and try to sleep a few hours before sunrise.

Jed laughed outright. "You fellows want me to put you to sleep with a story. Well, if I don't fall off myself I'll do my best. But when the first fellow snores I quit, so watch out, every one of you. What will it be tonight, boys?"

"A Pikes Peak tale," spoke up Boots, "and make it a whopper, Jed."

"Tell us about the 'Great Triumvirate,' Jed, on the Pikes Peak trip a year ago."

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"A very appropriate one for tonight," replied Jed. "Wish the 'Triumvirate' were along with us now. These are the kind of hikes they glory in. Well, it's a long story and I bet half of you will go to sleep. Do you think so?"

"No, no," came the protest as they moved in closer to settle down for the tale.

"Camp Colorado was the jolliest camp I've ever been in, except, of course, this one. But as for ever forgetting some of the thrilling experiences it brought to me, that would be impossible.

"There were just forty-three of us and we were camped in Cathedral Park, which lies just south of Pikes Peak, with a multitude of smaller peaks rising in between, while the beautiful valley of Seven Lakes, that last tag end of some mighty glacier of the ice age, nestles in at the foot.

"It was the very heart of one of the noblest Forest Reserves that Uncle Sam has yet laid out, and embraces millions of acres of timber that is superb, naturally; for back in some of those inaccessible, well watered canyons the trees are a sight never to be forgotten—lodge pole pine, tall and straight, whole fields of them a hundred feet high;

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silver spruce in great clumps; and Engleman pine by the countless millions. In many places the pine needles lie eighteen inches thick and the whole valley is simply alive with woodfolk.

"There are no roads save two, and these are mere logging trails of very recent date. Far to the north the Peak raises her snow-white head and smiles on the beautiful valley, fresh from the hand of Nature. Bald Mountain is her footstool, and to the front, bowed and waiting for her majesty's orders, lingers Rosa, her jaunty cap of ermine peaked, her shoulders bleak and stern, while far, far away Pikes Peak's foundations are lost in the purple haze of a million pine trees.

"It was the harvest moon, when every day and night is perfect. I don't know who suggested it, I think Herb Brenton, the leader of the 'Great Triumvirate,' but anyway his two side pals, Al Henson and Phil Nohe, immediately popularized the suggestion and by three o'clock the entire camp of forty-three fellows were busy preparing for a moonlight trip up Pikes Peak, through the impenetrable forest with no trail, no guide, no landmarks of any kind; nothing save an

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abundance of high spirits and a great love for adventure.

"The cook made each fellow a little lunch as best he could from his small store. Well, I remember just what it consisted of—two buttered biscuits, three slices of bologna, a handful of dried apples, a lemon and two hardtacks. These we tied in a large bandana handkerchief and fastened them to our belts.

"Each boy cut for himself a stout aspen walking stick, tied a sweater over his shoulders, fastened a tin cup to his belt, put a new pair of strings in his high boots, then chose his place in the line by picking a number out of a hat.

"The flagpole ropes were lashed together, then every hiker fastened the rope to his belt just three big paces from the hiker ahead of him—exactly as we did tonight and for the same purposes—namely, to keep in line, to hold a steady pace for all, and to keep from straggling out over too great a stretch of country in the night.

"By common consent Herb was chosen 'Pathfinder' and Phil his 'Aidé-de-camp.' It just happened that Al drew slip number one, and so the 'Great Triumvirate' (a title the

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three had won for themselves because of their loyalty each to the other and to every good cause, and also probably because of their outstanding leadership among their fellows) were all together at the head of the line, a coincidence that was fortunate.

"As we left camp and wound off through the heavy timber we looked for all the world like some savage jungle tribe off on a raid, made more realistic by the many war-whoops and cat-calls that kept the cliffs reverberating from the time we started until night closed in about us.

"After an hour's travel we struck North Beaver and decided to follow the course of the first lake, then swing north on the high ridge and keep the lakes as a landmark, for they were easily discernible in the full moonlight.

"Oh, the songs we sang and the bright and witty sayings that were passed from camper to camper down through the forest, around great jutting cliffs, across madly rushing streams, up steep, loose talus slides, over immense prostrate trunks or through thickets of young quaking aspen!

"How we shouted our line numbers, hitting every key from low G to high C in

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voices that ranged from a mighty shout down to a changing falsetto or a shrill quaver.

"We were Indians on the warpath. We were Arctic explorers making a valiant dash for the Pole, and then we were a rescuing party trailing through the Alps in search of a party of lost and freezing travelers.

"Many a squirrel peered down on us with wondering eyes or scolded us for our noisy invasion. Many a jaybird hurled saucy taunts at us as we passed, and no doubt many a green, glaring forest eye watched us come and go without being observed. Probably the big buck stopped still in the thickets to sniff the hated man smell or to listen to hullabaloos, while who knows how many mountain lions slipped deeper into the gloom or slunk along behind, coaxed on by their ever active curiosity. Twice we scared up a bobcat and more than once various hikers were sure they saw strange, ghostly shapes emerge from the forest, only to be swallowed up immediately by the long, yellow, ever-shifting shadows, or to be blotted out by the inky black silhouettes of monstrous pines and spruce trees.

"Herb was a wonder. So well did he

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choose the path that by nine o'clock we were at the base of Baldy and knew that somewhere to the north lay Pikes Peak.

"At ten o'clock we halted by a crystal spring, put our camp-scarred coffee pot to boil, and sat down to rest our weary legs. The easy part now lay behind. The real struggle was yet ahead. Instead of soft wooded hillsides and fresh running water there would be only mile after mile of cold bleak granite. We could already see the timber line above us, a great dark shadow encompassing Baldy on one side until it was lost far away to the west in a faint glimmer of the Snowy Range, cold, bleak, snowbound.

"It was decided that if there were any hikers who for any reason felt they were not equal to the balance of the trip they should stay by the fire and await our return, but there were none. So after a half hour's rest and a few suggestions the line again took up its march, only more quietly and a bit slower.

"When our spirits lagged the 'Triumvirate' revived them. Big boys took smaller boys' sweaters to lighten their load. Walking sticks were cast aside; shirt necks were thrown open; and the march resumed in ear-

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nest. 'Pikes Peak or Bust' was our slogan, with 'The Summit for Sunrise' as an agreement and a compact among us.

"The air grew chill and the trail less clear. Frequent stops were made for rests while many words of advice were handed back down the line. 'Look out for a hole,' 'Keep your eye on this stump,' 'Watch out for the step-off,' 'A good spring at your left,' and many more like them.

"A rousing cheer went up when far away in the night a brilliant light flashed high in the sky, then circled over the peaceful valley, then up to a passing fluffy cloud. It was a great eye in the night that sent cheer and encouragement to every patient climber. 'The flashlight on the Peak,' cheerily called Herb. 'I believe the cog-road lies to our right; let's make for it.'

"It was strange what strength came from watching that glittering light. It looked so near, surely we would be there away early if we kept on at our present rate, so why not slow up and rest a bit oftener?

"But the 'Triumvirate' were mountaineers to the core and the light only lured them on with new vigor and fresh anticipation.

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"At last we emerged from the shelter of old Baldy. Immediately the crisp, frosty wind nipped our ears and noses. Sweaters were pulled on and gloves drawn over numb fingers. Very often snow patches were now seen while the trail grew slippery and the grade steep. The less sturdy fellows began to complain. Legs began to ache and eyes to grow heavy and listless. Yet Herb urged us on before a stop was made.

" 'Let's make "Sun-of-a-gun Hill" or "Windy Point," ' he said, 'and then we'll have a good rest for the last climb.' His Aidé-de-camp seconded the motion, and Al, as line leader, agreed, so the rope was again pulled tight and we pushed on for another thirty minutes almost in silence. Ahead lay a great, broad bluff, and Herb assured us it must be 'Windy Point,' and as we had no reason to believe otherwise we all made haste toward it.

"It was just ahead now. Five minutes more, then the promised rest! But alas, when it was reached, what was our disappointment to find our climb had been all for nothing. We were far, far from 'Windy Point,' but were in reality on the rock-crowned summit of Bald Mountain. Far

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away and apparently in the sky floated the big eye of the searchlight, below us yawned a mighty canyon, so big that the trees at the bottom looked like a dark carpet in the moonlight. Far away we heard a faint yodle and a merry laugh. Then from somewhere up out of that mammoth canyon came the querulous bray of a tired, overloaded donkey. Herb gave a shout, followed by Al and Phil. Now they could locate their position exactly. Below them and across the canyon lay the burro trail from Manitou, and that song—the song of the Rocky Mountain canary—told of a long line of patient beasts of burden plodding that very trail, carrying their load of humanity that for one reason or another did not care to attempt the climb on foot.

"'Poor old donks,' said Al soberly. "I'll bet some monstrous fat man is half-asleep in that poor brute's saddle this moment. Shank's horses for me, though, every time.'

"The Chief ordered a halt and a good rest. It was very certain there were some that could not go on.

"'Every fellow who leaves this fire,' warned the Chief, 'must continue to the top,

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for we are now just at timber line and there is not a stick of firewood above us.'

"Three gave up and the rest filled the ranks tight for the plunge into the canyon. It was just twelve o'clock. It would be three hours and a half until sunrise.

"I shall never forget it—that desert of broken granite lighted by the yellow moon. Far above us was the immense eye of that searchlight, now playing in the clouds, now on Mt. Baldy's rugged top, then far off to the north over other countless peaks and valleys. Now and then a merry laugh would come floating up from the trail below or a long halloo from far up on the cog-road as other travelers toiled up and up the steep, slippery, frosty trails.

"One o'clock found us at the actual bottom of Pikes Peak. By two o'clock we were well started up the mighty pile, but our steps were slower and our conversation had almost entirely died out. It was a tremendous struggle for many a lad, and only that reassuring gleam from the searchlight kept them at it at all.

"Two-thirty found us on the railroad, toiling up the frosty ties, twenty at a climb and then a rest. The long rope was now

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taken off and the stronger ones released to hurry if they cared to, for a heavy, soft snow had begun to fall and the wind was biting cold.

"In a few moments we reached the cement house, a rough shack that had been built when the railroad was built and used to store cement in. Here we found a dozen cold and weary travelers, mostly sick from the high altitude, all snuggling about a tiny fire that was kept burning by cutting slivers from the timbers of the shack.

"First they grumbled at our arrival, then grumbled at our departure, for so many hands made the cutting of the wood a small chore. We left a half-dozen of our smallest boys behind to come on when they could, and the rest pushed on in a blinding snowstorm.

"We now unfortunately remembered our lunches and promptly drew them out to devour them. We had very much to learn as peak climbers, but were destined that night to grow some wiser.

"Bologna, dried apples and hardtack! What a diet for a mountaineer at fourteen thousand feet of altitude. Then we sang a bit to cheer up the weary ones, closing with

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a verse of 'Nearer, My God, to Thee.' Oh, my! In another thirty minutes we believed our sentiments were about to come true.

"Unable to 'feed the fishes' at such an altitude, we consigned most of our midnight feasts to the ravens and then staggered on.

"Thanks to the storm that kept us moving and to the fresh, piercing air that drew thoughts to cold feet and ears, we survived and at half-past three the leaders began to tumble in, one at a time, at the Summit House, tired, hungry and sick, yet successful.

"At the very first streaks of dawn we gathered at the windows to look out. Boy fashion, we had recovered tremendously with the aid of a little hot soup and a warm stove to sit by.

"The sunrise was a never-to-be-forgotten sight that stirred our enthusiasm deeply. We were glad we had made the good fight. We decided to get back down to where our trail left the railroad before the sun got too hot, so, suiting the action to the word, we were soon jogging down the steep trail up which we had labored, tie by tie, just a few hours ago.

"The Peak stood thousands of feet above

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every surrounding mountain, while the road oftentimes was built on a mere cliff from which we could look far, far down into rugged canyons, or far away to the Continental Divide, snow capped and glistening in the early sun.

"Miles below us lay the lakes we had come by in the night, fringed with mighty trees that now looked like mere weeds on the landscape. Then again the road would swing off down through two mighty walls of snow twenty-five feet high, only to emerge again on a sunny stretch where King Sol had feasted on the ice and snow until the rough granite of his huge plate showed through.

"We had just emerged from such an icy walled canyon and were turning a sharp curve on the mountain when Herb, who was forever in the lead and who was always a keen observer, suddenly called out in his excitement, 'See the mountain sheep, see the sheep.' Recklessly we rushed to the edge of the trail, then peered into the valley below. There, sure enough, grazed a small herd of genuine mountain sheep, a great buck, two ewes and two lambs.

"It was such an unusual sight that we for-

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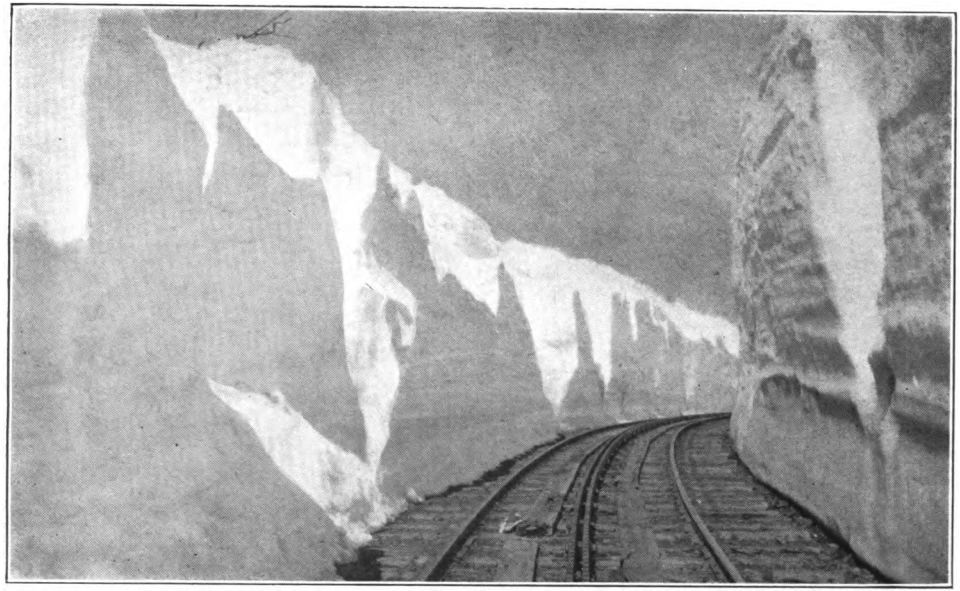

"THE ROAD WOULD SWING OFF BETWEEN TWO MIGHTY WALLS OF SNOW TWENTY-FIVE FEET HIGH"

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got caution and were only brought back to our senses by a sudden cry of alarm from Herb, who had ventured out on what seemed to be a solid shelf of ice where he might see the better.

"Without warning there was a sharp crack, a low, long rumble, and the ice shelf with Herb on it gave way. We were speechless. All stood spellbound fully a second. Not so Herb. He seemed to sense his danger in that instant, and, crouching low, gave one mighty leap, clutching wildly at the main ice cake for support. But, alas, he missed it and went sprawling head first on to a second snowy shelf some twenty feet below. Striking, he instantly sank completely out of sight. Only an instant before, the falling berg had struck this second shelf a heavy blow on the extreme edge, loosening it. Herb's additional weight turned the balance. Before our very eyes we saw the second shelf crack, tremble, then drop, drop, drop a hundred feet below, where it fortunately lighted in the tops of a grove of scrub cedars that had spent a hundred years endeavoring to grow in that sheltered nook, watered from the dripping ice cakes above; while the first huge berg went crashing down

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the mountainside, breaking itself into a thousand flying pieces.

"We peered over as best we could and looked, O so eagerly, for some movement in the snowy pile, but there was none.

" 'He went right through it,' whispered Phil, who had never taken his eyes from the falling ice and snow, 'and—and he will smother.' It came with a sob. The real meaning of the awful accident suddenly broke in upon us. Turning to the frightened Chief, Phil called again, as if he had not heard him the first time. 'He's gone. He went right through, and O—he'll suffocate.'

"Al was very calm, although his lip quivered in spite of himself. He was thinking very rapidly, his hands clenched tight.

" 'That rope, Chief, that rope,' he called suddenly. 'Let's have it.'

" 'It won't do,' groaned back the Chief despairingly, for he also had been doing some rapid calculating. 'It won't do, it's too short and too small. It wouldn't hold the smallest boy in the bunch. No, we must send back to the summit. It will take at least three hours.' He looked about him

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wildly, as if half expecting to find help closer at hand.

"There was a shout from the watchers.

" 'He moved, he moved!' they called. The Chief leaned over to see for himself. Yes, far below him the snow did move, but very little. Perhaps it was again falling. He closed his eyes, as a blinding dizziness seized him. Then suddenly he sensed a new danger, and in a voice filled with terror he called out, 'Fellows, get back, get back! Another piece might break, and that would surely crush him!' They clambered back reluctantly. The last boy hadn't left his place two seconds until there was the same strange creak. They stood aghast. Another huge piece broke and dashed downward.

" 'Oh, we have killed him,' groaned the Chief, taking all responsibility on himself. 'We have killed Herb,' and he wept bitterly. But as he watched the great chunk dash down it was suddenly turned over, buffeted by a projecting rock, swerved, then passed over the snowbank where Herb lay buried.

" 'Thank God,' said the Chief hardly above a whisper, then, turning, he sized up the group before him. He was looking for a

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messenger; one fleet of foot and strong; one that could do the impossible just then with a tired, worn and hungry body. But Phil interrupted him.

"'Chief, I have it. We must take our rope and double it, then strengthen it by knotting our sweaters to it. Then I'm going down to that first projection. The rope is long enough for that and will let me down safely. From there I believe I can work my way to the bottom, and can jump if I have to.' There was determination in his face.

"The Chief remonstrated. 'One down is enough, old boy. I need you to go to the Summit. You are the best man.'

"Phil looked disappointed, then determined. He spoke. 'No, Chief, you are wrong. I have decided to go down. You forget that Herb—my Herb—may suffocate before I can help him. Probably he is too stunned to move or—or——' and his lips quivered, while a big tear ran down his excited face, 'or dead.'

"Sweaters were peeled off; the rope was made ready; then Phil fastened it about him, giving his orders to Al just what to do and how to do it. Fortunately one stout walking

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stick was still in the party, and this was firmly held at the edge of the cliff by willing hands to keep the slender rope from cutting on the rock.

"As Phil prepared to let himself over he called out, 'Now, Chief, send two good boys in each direction for help, the best men down to the Half-way House. I think it's closer. After I get to the first ledge, pull up the rope and lengthen it out single stranded. It will reach to the bottom and you can send me what I need by means of it. If I can, I'll carry him to safety and wait for help. If not, I'll stay by him.' His face was stern and his body was now under perfect control. Phil's test had come. The life of his best companion now depended upon his nerve. As the rope was slowly let over the top he offered up a little prayer to the Great All Father for courage and self-control in that awful hour.

"He was landed safely after an anxious few moments. He leaped from crag to crag like a cat, down, down, down, to within twenty feet, but could go no further. He lay down, leaned over and called at the top of his voice, but received no answer. It decided him. He carefully surveyed the

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heap of snow and ice below him, then calmly letting himself over the edge, he dropped.

"It seemed a thousand feet to Phil, but at last he struck, fortunately into the soft snow, and sank in up to his waist. He quickly scrambled free, and in a few moments pulled a dark object out of a pit in the snowbank. It was Herb, limp and apparently dead.

"Al waited no longer. The muscles in his legs were quivering. Cold perspiration stood out on his forehead. He had been too heavy to go down on the rope, but he would do his share now. He slid out of every dispensable garment, took the one walking stick to help him keep from slipping on the frosty ties, then he was off at a gait that all admired silently. Down the tracks he sped, his splendid body responding to his every wish. It was for the Triumvirate. It was life or death. Another cake might crash down at any moment. Herb's only chance depended on how quickly Al could get the necessary help. He figured it would take three hours at his best to get help from the Half-way House. He closed his eyes to clear them of the strange mist that kept gathering there. On he sped. It seemed no

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time until he had reached the bottom of Son-of-a-gun, then the long level stretch and then the Half-way House. His heart was beating fast, his chest was heaving from the tremendous exertion, but he felt none of it.

"He dashed up to the big cabin and tried the door. His heart sank with a mighty thump. No one there. He called aloud in agonized cries for help, but his only response was an echo and re-echo from Thunder Castle. It seemed to be mocking him and it made him angry. Why wasn't the keeper there? Where was he at this time of morning, anyway? The old quivering returned to his lips and legs. A bitter sob slipped through his teeth. He had failed. Oh, the agony of it! It frightened him. Suddenly his eyes lighted on a track toboggan. He had heard of them many times, had read in the papers how a section man had jumped the track with one that very season and killed himself on the rocks in the canyon below. He had seen pictures of them often, but he had never before had one within his reach. He gazed down the steep, greasy track—a veritable chute-the-chute.

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The temptation came with tremendous force. Why not? He was not afraid and he knew that once on it he could fairly fly the four miles to Manitou. Help was there abundant. Perhaps he might persuade them there to run one of those little hump-backed engines up, with ropes and men to make the rescue.

"Then the vision of the dying section man, broken and torn and bleeding, in some lonely gulch where he had been thrown with a force almost inconceivable, flashed past his tired brain. He knew it was against the law for any but employés to ride them, but Herb needed help. He clenched his fists and bit his lips, for the tears were flowing fast.

" 'What's the difference,' he sobbed, 'if I do get killed if I can only save old Herb? It's his only chance. Can I return to them empty-handed? Never!'

"He seized the little iron machine—a tiny seat built to fit on the cogs, a simple lever that came up between the legs as you sat astride it and that acted as a brake by pinching two slugs in against the greased cogs. Then there was an iron bar bent at the ends that extended out over each rail to balance the craft and two small foot rests in

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front. That was all—yet if the brake failed it was death, certain death.

"He pulled the brake tight, sat down, and then, with every nerve again under control, he released the lever. She slipped; she moved faster; she became alive; away he went at a speed that fairly took his breath. He braced his feet on the foot rests, put both hands on the lever and looked straight ahead.

"The trees and rocks sped past like a moving picture film. The telephone poles seemed only inches apart. Sometimes the shrubs along the track seemed to run together into one green blot. Faster and faster he flew. Suddenly a thought struck him. What if he should run down some climber on the way up. He took a deep breath as the thought filtered into his disorganized brain. He only gripped the lever the tighter, and uttered an incoherent prayer to the All Father. Nothing on earth could stop him now unless it derailed him, and that meant certain death. He knew it, but was not afraid. He swung around curve after curve with such speed he could hardly keep his seat. Once or twice he bumped an uneven cog and thought all was lost, only to

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find himself speeding on again at the same terrific rate. On, on, on, until his ears hammered and his eyes were blurred with moisture.

"At last (it seemed to him he had been riding hours) Manitou loomed into view. He tried his lever, but to save his life he could not push it forward. It had stuck. He saw men ahead and a standing train. He pulled with all his might to no avail, then all was a blank.

"When he came to, a few seconds later, he was high upon the side of a long, steep hill. He was surrounded by a group of excited trainmen, and as best he could he was telling them of the accident to Herb and was begging for help to start at once to save him.

"He was picked up from the smoking toboggan and carried to the train shed. An engine was hastily run out, ropes were quickly brought and in a few moments they were ready. Then it occurred to Al to ask how he had managed to get up on the hill and what had prevented his running into the standing train.

" 'The only thing that saved your life, my boy, was the fact that we always keep the derailing switch turned at this end for

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fear a train might some time break loose on that awful grade. That derailing switch is all under heaven that could save it. The switch was open as usual and you glided full speed up the incline until you came to a dead stop, then you fainted. You're a plucky lad, my boy. We need lots more just like you.'

"In a moment the little engine pulled out and in an hour they were all back to the scene of the accident, Al wild to know of Herb's condition.

"The long, heavy ropes were quickly let out and after Phil had placed the body of Herb on the cross pole provided and had tied him on so in case he should faint he couldn't fall off, the pull began at the top.

"Soon he was at the surface, badly bruised and shaken up, but alive. At the top he fainted dead away and all effort to revive him proved futile.

"Next Phil was pulled up and such a shout as went up from the little party. Phil and Al bent over Herb eagerly to watch for the first signs of returning consciousness.

" 'Three cheers for the Great Triumvirate,' called someone and they were given with all the vim the tired boys could muster.

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"'And for the little hump-backed engine,' laughed Phil through his tears, 'and for Camp Colorado and the whole bunch. Hurrah!'"

Jed laughed again as he ended. "There," he said, "I see at least seven sound snoozers. Let the rest of us turn in. Good night."

"Good night, Jed," chirped "Red Head." "That was a whopper for sure. I'd like to hear another."

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STORY SIX

THE HERMIT OF CLOUDY RIDGE

"A TRANSCONTINENTAL airship would have some job in this gale," remarked Redhead thoughtfully, as he clambered up on a huge boulder in the lee of which the wagon and horse had been stopped to get out of the approaching storm.

"Guess we won't attempt to put up the tents until sundown," said the Chief, "perhaps the wind will settle then."

"Well, I should say not," echoed Ham. "It would be just like trying to stake down a balloon. Hey! there goes my hat."

"And mine, too," shouted Redhead from the rock. "Gee whillikers, fellows, this is a regular young cyclone. See that herd of fluffy white clouds coming down that valley. They look just like a herd of mountain sheep skipping along, don't they?"

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"I'll bet my hat there's snow in every one of them too," puffed Ham exasperatedly.

"That's a safe bet, with your hat traveling away from you fifty miles an hour," laughed Jed. "I'll take your bet."

The tired team was hastily unhitched and the old wagon backed into the shelter of a grove of large trees. Here a big canvas "tarp" was spread over it, for, as Jed said, there was no doubt but that something was going to happen, and that quickly.

With a shout we were all summoned to observe Ham's hat that had been suddenly snatched out of the hissing gale by a playful whirlwind and was just then being carried up and up in easy circular movements until it became just a speck, when it was just as suddenly released and hurled down to earth again by a mighty invisible air pressure.

Just as suddenly the entire camp realized that they were cold, for with the down pressure came floating a million snowflakes.

"This climate has gone on a spree," observed one camper. "Think of a snow storm on July twenty-two! and only yesterday we suffered from the heat. Say, these mountains are a regular box of surprises, aren't

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they? Wonder what's going to happen next?"

"Come! hustle a bit, you fellows," called the Chief good naturedly. "It's going to snow, and that means a big fire all night or lots of discomfort. Jed, you boss the building of a fire over against that great boulder while I see if there is any possibility of pitching the tents over in that grove. It's going to be a winter night."

Instantly the camp was a bee hive—every boy had been trained by his two weeks' outing on nature's back bone to do his share and do it joyfully. Soon chips were flying and the merry ring of the axes blended perfectly with the gale, the sighing trees, and the shouts of the merry jests. Some former capricious gale had toppled over an immense beetle-killed pine, and this supplied ample dry and seasoned firewood. Soon the blaze was pouring forth a shower of sparks and clouds of sweet-scented smoke into the wind-torn air. The snowflakes came faster and faster now, one moment floating down as daintily as daisies tipped from a basket, then again hissing and swirling as if bent on some fiendish mission; while many per-

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ished with a disappointed hiss on the hot coals of the merry blaze.

As soon as the work was cared for the fire became the center of attraction, and the space about it and in front of the great rock became a club room, then as evening settled down it became the kitchen, then when the delicious aroma of coffee and the last weiner and biscuit had disappeared it became the council chamber, only to be later converted by the shifting lights and deepening shadows into a cozy den, where assembled a happy company of rare good fellows that had become expert at finding hours of the purest joy and contentment just sitting before a living, breathing, ever-changing camp fire.

Shortly after dusk the sheep clouds disappeared as suddenly as they had come and took with them every fluttering snowflake, but the wind-shepherd lingered, seeking in every crack and cranny for any possible strays, calling them with as weird a song as ever shepherd sang. Now and then crying out his disappointment in mighty crescendos only to again and again fall back on the sweeter pleading, plaintive notes of an anxious shepherd. Then, with one last

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desperate cry, the wind, too, hurried down the rocky gorge and left us quietly before our open hearth. Once more it was summer.

"Now, Jed," called Redhead across the lighted coals, "let's have a story before we snooze. We were too tired last night, but tonight after that wind—Jed make it a good one."

Jed had been amusing himself by poking the fire with a long green limb and watching the angry sparks fly out of it, much as he had often seen hornets do when their gray paper nests were disturbed. However, he needed no urging, and the only delay was to select a fitting story for such a night.

"I have never told you about the Hermit of Cloudy Ridge, have I?" he asked slowly, as the group readjusted themselves. Then, without waiting for an answer, he began.

"I think it was one of the strangest incidents I have ever heard of and I have thought it over many, many times as I have sat by my camp fires alone. There is something almost uncanny about it.

"It was on just such a night as this one that I first heard the story. The wind blew such a gale that we were forced to seek shel-

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ter at a forest ranger's tiny cabin. There were eighteen of us in all and we had nine heavily laden pack donkeys. We had gone up through middle Park to Cheeseman Dam and crossed over the Divide to Platte canyon and were just started on the return trip down that rugged frost-scarred granite crevice that the Platte River has chosen for its bed. It is an area of towering granite crags, the prattling, foaming river in the foreground, a narrow fringe of purple forest, then thousands upon thousands of acres of blackened stumps and tottering fire-killed trees, ending in abrupt, granite cliffs that pierce the blue and stand out in bold relief against the summer sky.

"The ranger was one of those sturdy, wind-bronzed mountaineers that for one reason or another had chosen to spend his days far out in God's wilderness, away from the conventionalities and make-believe of city life. There was strength in every line of his face and music in his every word. His little cabin was as comfortable as an ingenious man with plenty of spare time could make it, but the things that impressed me most were a huge stone fireplace and rustic mantel draped artistically with long

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"HIS LITTLE CABIN WAS AS COMFORTABLE AS AN INGENIOUS MAN COULD MAKE IT"

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strings of selected cones, and a long line of well-worn volumes, conspicuous among which was a fine old family Bible.

"He seemed very glad to see us and welcomed us with as much grace and courtesy as you would expect from a Southern Colonel. Soon the black pot that hung on the home-made crane was singing and incidentally releasing with each bubble the odor of stewing venison. Then in an ancient fire pitted Dutch oven he put to bake two niches of golden corn bread. There was no butter, but the rich gravy took its place. How we enjoyed that change of food! for on the trip we had cooked and eaten in pairs and our variety was slim.

"After supper we drew in close about the fire and began to talk. Much to our surprise, the old ranger was better posted on what had been happening in the world since we started on our journey than we were ourselves, and I inquired how he got the news, to which he replied that he rode forty miles once a week to get the mail and to make his reports.

"'And you know, boys,' he added,—a merry twinkle and a pleased smile on his

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face, 'on the way home this time I saw Old Silver-Sides.'

"He seemed quite surprised that we had never heard of Silver-Sides, for, as he said, he supposed every man in the mountains of Colorado had heard the story of the great silver-tip bear.

"Of course we begged for the story, and the old man, seeing that we were thoroughly interested, told it from beginning to end.

"I've been in these mountains forty years, boys. Came first as an invalid, sick of life and looking for peace. I came with hatred in my heart for all mankind, for I had been born and reared in the city and, like thousands of other young fellows, had been dragged under by its lure and its glitter until I was no longer a man—hadn't a friend in the world; not a soul cared what became of me, I thought. The only savings I had accumulated were hatred, distrust, dissipation, and finally disgrace. I know now that there are two trails in every city,—one that leads up to the big, worth-while, beautiful things of life; the one that leads a man to joy and peace and contentment. The chart that directs a man on its way is service to

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his fellows. But there is another trail, too, and it is by far the easiest to find, because it never rises to heights above you; it's the trail of least resistance that takes a fellow straight to hell. I often thought if I had just had a father to help me find the other one I might have been different.

"Enough of that for now. At any rate, when I had got so far on the trail of selfish uselessness that I could not find my way back, at least in the city, I came one day upon an advertisement calling for forest rangers. It was away back when Uncle Sam first conceived the idea of protecting the millions of acres of timber that covered the Rocky Mountains, and it was hard to find men with enough education to make intelligent reports to go out to the front. I made up my mind quickly, and soon found myself in possession of the papers that made me a United States Forest Fire Marshal, with headquarters on the Platte. Two million acres of choice forest were put under my care, with twenty million acres more of burned stump and decaying fire-killed trees to constantly remind me of my responsibility and my duty and what carelessness cost.

"After a few years the novelty wore

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away and I began to grow lonesome for the brightly-lighted streets, for the babbling voices, the ribald song and the gay chatter of the theatre and the restaurant and worse places.

"Reduced to the simplest kind of fare, to fresh air, pure water, long rides through forests more stately than the most magnificent architecture; periods of strenuous labor, fighting a fire here or a fire there; long days of close association with birds and beasts, regenerated me wonderfully, until in a few years I was a strong healthy man again with pure blood in my veins, a clear eye, an acute ear, and self-control. Once more I looked at life with interest. Yet I was restless and unhappy. I began to think. I sat all night, many a night, before the fire in my cabin and mused on life and its meaning, on God and His wonderful creations, only to be brought back again and again to the desire for the old ways of my life in the city.

"Something warned me never to go back again to any city—some strange foreboding. Yet there was, waking or sleeping, that great unsatisfied desire for something I didn't have. I learned years afterward it

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was a longing for the friendship of a father, the desire for human fellowship.

"Spring came and with her a wonderful transformation. The ice melted, the birds sang, the forest wild flowers pushed through the ground. Well do I remember the first brood of dainty blue anemones I discovered by the side of a great boulder, their pink lavender heads resting each one in a cup of fuzzy green feathers, like so many tiny birds just hatched—and not a foot away the snow still lay on the ground. It was a miracle, and it set me thinking in a new direction. I went often that day and sat on the boulder to converse with my new friends, the anemones, who nodded their pretty heads in the breeze just as if they understood all I was saying to them. As I sat a big saucy squirrel came out to chat, and I observed for the first time in my life that he, too, was almost human. I had very often heard the jays jabbering in the trees by my shack, but the idea that they were trying in vain to be friendly with me never dawned upon me until that spring day.

"As the days went on I grew to be more happy and contented, and spent much time getting acquainted with my wood folk neigh-

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bors, feeding some, playing with some, and actually holding long conversations with others. To my surprise, it wasn't long until I came and went among them without in the least disturbing them, and many a pretty sight I saw, I assure you. Only the coyotes and timber wolves sneaked away from me, and I realized it was because they were murderers and that they lived always on the lower trail of selfish greed, seemingly unconscious of the wondrous beauty about them. I learned that the squirrels were always up for sunrise, and soon I joined them every morning and only learned after many years what I had been missing. Oh, the glorious sights from a mountain top as the sun comes up!

"The season came for my reports to be made and I knew that meant a trip to Leadville. I found, to my amazement, when the time came near that I did not care to go; that I dreaded leaving my friends even for a two weeks' period.

"Reluctantly I saddled up and started on my journey. I reached Leadville just a bit before dusk,—that hour of the day when 'snowy summits, light-tipped peaks, bright lakes, purple forests traced with silver

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streams and groves of aspen fuse and fade away into a golden haze.' I felt I was a stranger there, and as I paused at the edge of the simple mining village I saw a sight that I was to think of many, many times afterward. Coming in at a side street at right angles to me was an old, old man, an aspen pole in one hand for a staff and in the other a stout rope that was apparently fastened to a very shaggy dog that lumbered along at his side.

"Suddenly I heard a cry, and a little girl hurried up the street crying at the top of her voice, 'The Hermit! The Hermit!' I urged my reluctant pony over closer to the shambling figure in order to get a closer view. I noted that anxious mothers came hurriedly to lighted doors calling to their children to come in at once. There would be the patter of feet, a door would close with a bang, and then anxious faces appear at the window. As the old man passed on down the road suddenly a door opened and flooded the street with light as he reached that point. What was my astonishment to see that the old man's companion was not a dog at all but a huge silver-tip bear. I followed close, and the commotion increased

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the farther up the street he went. The word was evidently traveling ahead of us, for several rough miners put in their appearance now, and I noted that one slipped an ugly gun in his pocket as he joined the others. One was talking loudly and I overheard.

"'But he does steal them,' declared the first speaker. 'Over at Gold Crown last season Thorp lost his little——' But the balance was lost in the noise.

"The old man proceeded down the street calmly, the bear at his side, neither looking to the right nor to the left. I was able to see now a pack on his back and that his coat was made of many, many pieces of old leather sewed together. At last he entered a tiny store and after opening his shirt front he produced a greasy bag. Several men crowded into the store after him, apparently bent on mischief, and being curious I followed.

"My pony had become used to standing and waiting for me on the range, so without giving it a second thought I slipped out of the saddle and followed in. The old man spoke no word, but picking up a bit of paper he wrote a few sentences, handed them to the storekeeper, who was cursing at the top of

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his voice and keeping one eye on the great bear. After a little deliberation the storekeeper got down the desired articles. The old Hermit packed them carefully in his pack, weighed out the necessary gold dust, carefully replaced the greasy bag and prepared to leave. As he turned to go I noted a red leather cross sewed to his buckskin shirt.

"One boisterous miner stood directly in the Hermit's way. The Hermit endeavored to go around him, but was promptly blocked by another uncouth miner. He turned in the opposite direction, but another stood in his way. I saw in a twinkle there was trouble brewing and moved over a little nearer.

" 'You crazy old galoot!' cried one miner, as he made a pass at the old man's head with clenched fist. 'How many more times are you coming to scare our women and to steal our children?—Take that!' and with a powerful blow he struck the old man down. There was a snarl,—I shall never forget it,—a noise like precedes a blast. The great bear rose to his hind legs and began striking right and left. The man first to strike the Hermit was first to go down with a terrific slap, then another, and another. Someone

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shouted for a gun. As the crowd surged through the narrow door into the street the storekeeper cursed first the bear, then the Hermit, and finally the miners, from his uncertain perch on a stack of boxes where he had taken refuge. Then the mean, sneaking looking man I had seen farther down the street rushed to the door, gun in hand.

"'Where is that crazy old fool?' he demanded. 'I'll shoot him quick.'

"'It's the bear, not the Hermit,' cried someone in the street.

"'Shoot him! Shoot him!' cried the mob.

"The old hermit lay helpless on the floor and had uttered not a word. The bear, having cleared the room, returned to all fours and stood over his master licking his shaggy upturned face and making strange guttural sounds.

"Some way I felt no fear, and seeing the bear's solicitude for his master's safety I did not believe him vicious. I don't know why it was, unless because I, too, had become in a way a wild creature, that I, without a moment's hesitation, decided to champion the cause of the old man and the bear against the mob. Quick as lightning I grabbed two bottles of catsup from the shelf

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behind me and sent them crashing through the glass door where the crazed miner stood, gun in hand, trying to determine whether to shoot bear or man first. He had not seen me in the corner, and being taken off his guard the catsup completely confused him. He turned to flee, tripped, fell, and sprawled off the narrow porch into the street. The gun flew out of his hand and lay harmless on the floor. I thought quickly. Leaping out I snatched up the gun and took my place at the door with the gun turned on the crowd. They were miners to a man and expected trouble. I was a stranger, and I must make use of that fact. Soon the men returned, many with guns, and clamored for entrance, cursing hotly at the intervention, but I stood my ground. I pointed the gun through the opening and cried, 'Stand back!' I was determined to see justice done at any cost, for I could not see the old Hermit murdered by a lawless mob without knowing more of the trouble, whether he was right or wrong.

"I then demanded that the old Hermit be given a chance and that whoever accused him do it openly. To my surprise no man accused him. The old man, who meantime

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had come to himself, sat up and stared with wide open eyes. The bear stood expectantly waiting, ready to carry out any demand.

"'Who accuses this man?' I cried again, 'and why this disorder? Shame upon you to attack so old a man and he unarmed!' Then turning I looked at the old Hermit who stood, his eyes fastened upon me as if without seeing, a look of deep surprise on his kindly old face, and his whole frame gently quivering. He was swallowing hard.

"'Who are you?' I demanded. At which the crowd drew in nearer, and one old man, apparently a town officer, addressed me in a quiet tone.

"'Don't know who you are, sir. Never seed you afore. But it's certain you don't know the Hermit. He's a crazy old galoot as means no harm, sir, that lives now in this valley, now in that one, always searching, searching. Sometimes we'll hear of him away over at Rock Fork, then again at Silver Plume or Cripple Creek, and he seems always to be hunting for someone. He takes every young boy he can lay his hand on and peers long and deep into his face, as if hunting a long-lost child, then with a sad, sad nod he goes on his way again. Many strange

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stories have sprung up about him, his leather coat, and his bear. Just where he got the bear no one knows, only that years ago it was a cub and that he's never been seen without him. There is some as say the old man is a kidnapper, but I don't think so. At least there is no proof. But one thing is certain—he is daft completely.'

"I listened in astonishment.

" 'Then why this rough treatment at your hands?' I demanded.

" 'The Hermit is the bogey-man of these mountains, sir,' continued the miner, 'and some men are superstitious. He seems to bring bad luck. Hank, here, who caused this commotion, has been drinking. He'll kill some man yet before he dies. Now, sir, seeing as you are an absolute stranger, may I ask—Who are you?'

"I liked the friendly spirit of this man, so I answered freely: 'I am the Ranger from Tarryall, and came over here on business. My name is John Karlton: and yours?'—I extended my hand to him.

"The Hermit came several paces closer, then in a voice so full of feeling that he could not control it he spoke the name several

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times, as if endeavoring to recollect something.

" 'Karlton—Karlton—Karlton,' then with a great sob he cried aloud, 'Thank God!' and sank to his knees.

"The miners had crowded into the little store again, seeing there was to be no shooting, and stood with questioning faces. I was perplexed beyond measure, but remembering that the old man was crazy I waited to see developments, wondering the while why my name affected him so strangely. All had drawn back instinctively, and there were murmurs of surprise on all sides.

" 'Sir,' the miner with whom I had been talking addressed me, 'no man has ever before heard the Hermit speak aloud, and yet you say you never saw him before?—He seems to know you.'

"I replied that I had not, but all the while, although I could not for the life of me remember where or when, there was something about the old man that seemed familiar. My mind began digging strange thoughts out of my banished past. Then suddenly, just as the sun breaks through a cloudy sky and sheds light in every direction, so a thought filtered through my brain. This old fellow

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was looking for someone that had been lost to him,—perhaps a son. Thus his ceaseless wanderings. And, strange as it seemed, yet it was not at all impossible, the person sought had evidently been named Karlton, which was, as I knew, a very common name in certain sections. Some way it made my mind run back to my own father, whom I had never really known at all, but knew had been dead many years. I did all this thinking quickly, for the next instant the old Hermit was holding out his hands to me and saying, in tones so full of feeling that he could hardly suppress the sobs,—

"'So you are John Karlton!' He searched my face for the answer. My heart leaped to my throat. I answered, hardly above a whisper, not knowing why I did, 'Yes, my name is John Karlton.'

"'Son of Thomas Karlton, of Denver? say it is you!'

"'Yes, son of Thomas Karlton, of Denver, but—but, my good friend, pray tell me who are you and what do you know of my father, for he has been dead these many years.'

"The old man's knees trembled and suddenly he sank to the floor. He had fainted

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dead away. We lifted him carefully to a counter and made all efforts to revive him. A doctor was sent for, and in an hour we had the old man comfortable in the home of my new friend. But he never spoke again. The doctor said it was a total stroke of paralysis. The poor old fellow was absolutely helpless and could not speak or write. His eyes were his only power of expression, and I can see them yet looking up at me. He lingered a few days, then died without throwing any light whatever on the strange event of the evening.

"We laid his body away and built a cross of stone on the fresh mound, thinking it would please the old fellow, for evidently the red leather cross on his breast had meant great things to him. Just what it meant no one would ever know.

"The strangest thing about it all was that the bear, Old Silver Sides, disappeared in the night as completely as if he had never come into the village at all. No one saw him go, and he left no trail behind.

"After my business was taken care of I began my return trip to my cabin home, but not until I had heard many, many strange stories of the old Hermit of Cloudy Ridge

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and of his persistent search for a lost human treasure. Many were, no doubt, wild fictions that had sprung largely from suggestions, yet they all pointed plainly to the fact that the old man had spent many years of his life searching for someone, probably a lost and erring son. I returned to my cabin and my host of wild friends with a deep thankfulness that, although I had spent many years of my life traveling on the lower trail, in the mountains I had discovered the higher trail, and after that I found perfect peace and contentment living in God's great out-of-doors, and was truly thankful that my father had never known of my wasted past.

"Once on the way back I was certain that I sighted Silver Sides. A few months later some fishermen passed this way and told of having seen an immense silver-tip bear but could not get close enough for a shot. The next year I returned to Leadville and was told that Silver Sides had been seen by several miners upon different occasions, but where he lived it was impossible to tell. They said he looked older and that his gait was slower and more deliberate.

"After I had had time to think the in-

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cidents over, it occurred to me that Silver Sides might return to his master's cabin, if he had any, and that if I could but trail him I might find out more of the old man and his history. Just why I cared to know more I didn't know.

"One fall I made a trip with the deliberate purpose of hunting Silver Sides, but he must have been on the other side of the range, for I saw him no more until the next fall, and then he almost seemed to recognize me.

"That year a tremendous fire broke out on Little Beaver and spread North, and while it was not in my territory, it got so bad that we were summoned from all over the reserve to help corner it. I had worked many days without proper food or sleep and was just about exhausted. At last I climbed out onto a rocky projection and lay down for a few moments' rest.

"I had hardly settled myself before I became aware that I had chosen a choice spot to see unusual sights, for just below me in the canyon ran a game trail,—a trail apparently to water, and as I watched I beheld three deer, fire-scared and shaky, walk calmly out of the timber, stop, sniff the

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smoke-soaked air, then hurry on. In a little bit a great buck came down the same trail, and then—I could hardly believe my own eyes—Silver Sides sauntered out of the underbrush, went to the stream, plunged in his huge head, drank deeply, and just as an immense spruce toppled over on a ledge far above him with a mighty crash Silver Sides slipped out of sight.

"It just happened that I had worn to the fire the ancient leathern coat of the Hermit's, for I had brought it and his buckskin shirt home with me after his death. Just why, I never knew really, but I often argued with myself that it was because the Hermit was the first man I had ever stood up for against heavy odds.

"Upon arriving at the fire I had hung the coat on a tree near my pony, and thought no more of it until an hour after seeing Silver Sides my pony came dashing through the timber toward where I stood directing the workmen and studying the timber ahead with my glasses. Pintoe's bridle was completely demolished, as if by a mighty jerk. I, being busy, tied her again temporarily and did not go back for my coat until night, when, to my dismay, I found it gone, and upon

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examining the ground carefully found unmistakable trails of Silver Sides.

"It seemed almost incredible to suppose the bear had taken the coat,—yet, why not? Surely he would recognize it, for an animal that could smell game for miles and water for tens of miles would have no difficulty in identifying the coat.

"My curiosity was thoroughly aroused, and the fire being fairly well under control, I determined to find Silver Sides. The hunt began, and, not to my surprise, led straight through the great burnt area up to the solid granite cliffs, and here I lost it. Yet I was determined. I returned to the cabin, got my gun, made up a pack, and came again on foot to see if I could find what Silver Sides had done with the coat. For three days I searched and searched, listened and watched, but to no avail. I was rapidly approaching Cloudy Ridge, and beyond lay the Sangre De Cristo range buried in perpetual snow and ice. I was already at timberline. I had failed. I took out my glasses, climbed a great sliver of granite and studied every part of the great ridge that was visible at that point, once, twice, and no trace, when suddenly my eye caught sight of something

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glistening in the setting sun. It was probably eight miles away. What could it be? I camped, cooked my supper, and thought it over, with the result that on the morrow I started to find it.

"I found it with greater ease than I had thought possible, and what do you suppose it was?—A broken bit of looking glass fastened to a tree, and directly behind it the coziest little cave you will ever see. A fireplace had been rigged so as to use a crevice for a flue. A bundle of pine boughs lay in the corner, an old gun, rusted and dirty, stood well back in the shadows. A flat ledge of stone served as a table, and on it were a dozen books, all much worn and marked. Among them was an old family Bible. I had not seen one for years, so took it up first to see if I could ascertain to whom the cave belonged, for evidently it had not been occupied for some time."

The Ranger's voice fell to a hoarse whisper, and his eyes shown bright in the firelight. He rose, went to the mantel and tenderly took down the Bible I had noticed when we first came in. Opening it he handed it to me to read. In a pretty hand was written—

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"Born to Wm. and Mrs. Thomas
Karlton a son John
March 21—18——"

"Boys, that was my mother's Bible, and I had found the shanty of the Hermit. It held many treasures for me, you may be sure—a photo of my mother, much as she looked at her death, something of our family history and an account of a misunderstanding that had separated them years and years before, resulting in father's hitting the Lower Trail. He traveled it fast until, like myself, he fled to the mountains, and there, under the healing touch of old Dame Nature, he, too, had grown to be a man again. He returned to the city to save his boy, only to learn he was gone—gone to the mountains, disgraced. He started resolutely to find him, with no other objective in life. You know the rest. From that time on he kept a diary, which was complete up to the time of his trip to Leadville on that never-to-be-forgotten night.

"Boys, it was full of the wisdom of the years, and has helped me stay on the Upper Trail ever since.

"I made several trips to the cave after

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that to transport the belongings to my cabin, and upon my third trip I was not surprised to find my father's leather coat back in the shadows and many unmistakable evidences of Silver Sides. He was loyal even to a dead master, and I honored him for it.

"It was my privilege to save his life from a hunter's gun only last year, at the risk of my own, but it brought me great satisfaction. I've never seen him there, but I'm certain he still makes the old cave headquarters when he is not out hunting. There, you have the story of Old Silver Sides, and I never tire telling it."

Again he rose, went to the shelf and took down a little worn leather diary and turning to a favorite page read aloud in a clear, sweet voice that was rich in manly quality:

" 'December 21—18——

" 'Tonight as I hit the trail along the great crowded thoroughfares, en route to my nest, I passed great crowds of people, among them many white, flabby-faced men, and swarms of richly-gowned women with faces painted like old-fashioned circus clowns, swarming out of theatres or fashionable restaurants, and I wondered why

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God ever made such people. By the time I reached my lonely roost I made up my mind that the good God never made them at all, but that they are creatures of the environments established by man, the hot-house growth of unhealthy city surroundings, that have sprouted up like potatoes in a cellar.' "

He turned a few pages and then found another favorite.

" 'January 19—18——

" 'There are two trails in life. I know it now. The upper one that's reached by unselfish service for your brother man; the other the trail of least resistance, and it leads a man to hell. How I long for a sight of the boy once more. I wonder if I've come to my senses too late.'

"Poor father! It was most too late, and yet——" The old man mused a bit, then closing the book with a sigh said simply, "Well, let's go to bed, lads. I suppose you'll be up and moving early in the morning?"

I answered that we would. Thanking him for the story we spread our blankets and were soon silent, some of us sleeping and some of us thinking of the two trails.

Two days later we were camping on Crystal Creek. The camp fire was lighted and

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the donkies picketed for the night. A great full moon rose over the canyon wall and lighted it as by day. I went down quietly to the stream to get a drink. Noticing the mules were uneasy I slipped into the shadows and watched, for I thought I saw something moving on the moon-lit ridge; and as I looked old Silver Sides came to the edge, his huge body silhouetted against the moon, looked down at the little camp, whiffed the aroma of fresh coffee, and then disappeared in the darkness, while I slipped back to camp to sit and think over the story of the Hermit.

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STORY SEVEN

JACK AND JILL GO FISHING

"It's the last time we will pitch these old tents this season," said Redhead, half sadly. "My! I wish we were only starting instead of making our last camp. Don't you?"

"I sure do," answered Boots. "Tomorrow it's back to civilization, white collars, a crease in your breeches, and a necktie. O my!——" He heaved a great sigh as if conscious of some inevitable calamity that was about to befall him.

Just then Ham came through the bushes from the spring, a pail of crystal water in each hand, singing

"So it's home again, and home again:
The city, boys, for me!
My heart is turning home again, and
There I long to be,
In the land of youth and freedom——"

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Here his hilarity came to a sudden stop, for a treacherous little root had caught Ham's toe and down he went into the puddle of his own making.

There was a shout of applause, and tired campers put in their appearance from every direction to add their jest and laugh.

"Come, come, fellows," laughed the Chief, "let's get at that camp fire now before dark, for you know we want a real one tonight as a farewell."

Before darkness fell a splendid pile of dry logs and brush had been gathered and carefully stacked by one group, while the other was off to the Ice Cave over the ridge to fetch ice for the ice cream.

"Such a freezer," laughed Boots, as he took in the scene before him. An old tub sat on the ground. Just in the middle of it had been placed a fifty-pound lard pail, the space between packed tight with ice. The last cans of condensed milk were opened and poured in, a box board was nailed to the lid to serve as a dasher, a long iron rod from the camp stove was inserted through the top of the lard can. Two sturdy boys rotated the can in the tub by means of push-

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ing, then pulling quickly on the ends of the rod.

"O yes, it's working like a charm!" scoffed the skeptic. "We'll have ice cream for next Sunday dinner—at home!"

"Just for that," called Ham from his place at one end of the rod, "I move you don't get a smell."

The skeptic made haste to change his tune. "O yes, of course it will freeze, but—say, by the Great Horned Spoon, look at that, will you!"

The lid had been lifted just a wee bit, and sure enough the cream had thickened a great deal and was already frozen hard at the edges.

Supper was a clean-up meal of all the odds and ends, but, being the last one, was made much of and enjoyed all the more.

Darkness came quickly, and then the torch was applied to the fire. O such songs and yells! O such stunts and good fun. Each tent group doing its best to outdo the one preceding it. After all the preliminaries were over the great tub of ice cream was dragged forth bodily and dished to all around in very generous helpings; then around again and again, until the spoon

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scraped suspiciously on the bottom and the can was empty.

Suddenly the flaming logs sputtered, lurched to one side, and then toppled over in a mass of glowing embers. The campers, tired, footsore, sunburned, but happy, drew in closer and made their circle more compact. A silence fell and for some moments all seemed to be lost in the thoughts of the morrow and home. Many a heart beat just a little faster at the thought of "home again, home again," only to be followed by a real pang of regret that this was the last jolly camp fire for this year.

Redhead had been standing a little apart, and his countenance was a study as the soft tones from the fire played on his mischievous face. At last, as if arriving at a conclusion after long and careful thought, he blurted out, "Well, there's one thing we won't get at home, and that's Jed's stories. Say, Jed,"—and he turned his face pleadingly to the story teller, "tell us two tonight, won't you?" He was really serious.

Jed laughed as he looked at Redhead across the circle of light. "I suppose you want them both at once, don't you, Reddie, old boy?" he bantered.

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"Not much!" replied Red with some feeling. "One at a time, Jed, and spread 'em out just as long as you can. I haven't been really homesick yet, and I want to be awfully sleepy tonight when I go to bed."

"Let her flicker, Jed," urged a close companion, and so Jed arranged himself, then looked steadily into the flame for his inspiration. He always told his stories to the fire.

"Fellows, I've been saving this one for tonight. I don't know just why, but I have, and it's about Jack and Jill. You would know both boys in a second if I should tell their real names."

An amused chuckle went round the fire, and Jed realized that some did know.

"Now, fellows, I don't mean the Jack and Jill that you have been taught belonged to Mother Goose, but I mean Jack and Jill that went on the pack trip with us two years ago. Jack was a great sturdy lad, with the bluest of blue eyes, hair that was soft and white, and a smile that made him a favorite. Jill was a smaller lad, dark hair, and eyes of brown with a seriousness that was far beyond his years. Now these two boys were pals—chums of the chummiest sort; what

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was one's was the other's, and either would fight for the other at the drop of a hat. Now Jack was possessed with a temper of the Russian bomb variety, and occasionally, although Jack tried earnestly and with, for the most part, good success to keep it under control, I say occasionally, it would slip, and then, take it from me, things moved in that immediate vicinity. The biggest part of Jack, however, was his humor and goodwill, and this combination most always came to his rescue when the 'bomb' part got him into trouble.

"Now Jill was a very different sort; earnest beyond all compare, and as conscientious in every little commonplace task as if the world depended upon it. Among the many things that Jill believed was the fact that Jack was the best fellow that God ever put into trousers, and he treated him accordingly. The friendship between these two boys, based on mutual respect, was really an inspiring thing, and more than once the splendid way they got around difficulties by helping each other was a joy to the entire camp.

"That pack trip brought many hard days, for it rained and rained until firewood was

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soaked, provisions molded in the grub bags, and the donkeys grew tired carrying wet tents and equipment.

"Incidentally the rains had stirred up the streams to such an extent that the trout fishing was very poor. At last we crossed over the Divide into the Goose Creek country and found ourselves as in a new climate. The country was the wildest I've ever seen, every foot suggesting that old Dame Nature had lain awake nights thinking how she might make the valley a little more picturesque. On either side of the narrow canyon rose mighty walls of granite two to five thousand feet high, broken and slivered and split in great slender shafts that looked as if they might topple over any second; then again a knob of cold gray stone rose up that appeared to be able to repulse the mightiest earthquake that the world might ever experience.

"At the bottom of the valley ran, or rather raced, a fretful mountain torrent, now dashed into a foamy spray by some huge pebble, now racing along in age-worn grooves, only to leap headlong, twenty, fifty, and a hundred feet into a great deep pool at the base of a jutting cliff.

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"Far up on the mountainside wound the slender trail, a mere thread of earth that had collected through the ages and been patted into form by countless mountain sheep and shy deer, an occasional mountain lion, or by the huge slab feet of a grizzly coming down from the heights to drink.

"For half a day our little cavalcade of heavily-laden burros toiled up this rock-strewn crevasse. For half a day forty tired legs climbed and labored on the side of that huge mountain, and then, just shortly after noon, we reached a little park—a jewel of soft green grass and quiet pools, stately aspens, singing birds and chattering squirrels. Down the canyon the stream had been so noisy we could hear nothing save its thundering music. Now, as if by magic, we came into a spot where the tiniest cricket could lift his rasping voice and be heard, while far away thundered the drums of nature in a never-ceasing, never-resting rush and roar of falling water.

"We camped. O the peace and quiet of it! We rested. O the joy and satisfaction of life in such a place! The stream was clear and cold and at once suggested fish—not just common fish of the salt sea kind,

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but trout, mountain trout, the spryest, gamest, most determined fighter that nature has given fins.

" 'I'm going fishing, Jack,' said Jill. 'Want to go along?'

" 'Sure,' came the prompt reply. 'I'll bet I can catch the biggest trout first.'

" 'Prove it!' came the acceptance, in a friendly yet determined way.

" 'Don't go far, boys, will you?' cautioned the Chief. 'You know that canyon is very dangerous. A slip might mean your death.'

" 'Sure, we'll be careful, Chief,' assured Jack, good naturedly. 'We'll do nothing foolish.'

"Together the two boys slipped down the upper trail that led over immense granite boulders a hundred feet in diameter, then down by some foam flecked pool, around the base of a towering crag that had stood for centuries bathing its feet in the cool, clear stream.

"Willow poles were soon rigged and flies attached, haversacks adjusted to the shoulder, and the fishing began. Sometimes it was in a green pool far below them; sometimes it was in the white ripples where the water was torn and buffeted by unseen

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rocks; sometimes it was by letting the long line down an irregular crevice between the jammed boulders; but it was always with more or less success.

"There would be a golden streak, a splash, a tightening of the slender line, a tug, a slack, a quiver, and then the skilful fisherman would play and play until he was able to lift the speckled beauty out and place him in the bag. And so the game went on.

"Now Jack and Jill were real boys. Consequently, what the other fellow caught became of more and more interest, and it must be confessed that in the excitement of that hour there was more than one pang of jealousy as first one, then the other, would pull in a beauty just a little longer than any that had preceded it.

"On down the canyon they fished, coming ever nearer to where the stream suddenly and without a warning tumbled over a polished cliff and into a great tangled mass of drift logs, huge boulders, and the trash of many spring freshets.

"The boys could plainly hear the thunder of the falling water. So loud did it thunder that they had long since given up

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friendly conversation and only shouted an occasional remark to each other.

"By and by their luck changed—rather, Jack's did, and he was forced to watch Jill pull in two that far surpassed anything he had himself caught. You would hardly believe it, but there in that majestic canyon the wee small voice of the Evil One came, and now he was whispering in Jack's ear, saying, 'Jack, you came to this pool first. Why let Jill pull out all the big ones before your very eyes?' Jack was disconsolate, but in his inner heart knew better. Jill had as much right as he, but why Jill's luck; Jack was conceded to be the better fisherman. The wee voice came again. Jack stirred uneasily. What was that? Jill's line tightened—yes, went down? Yes! ah! a splash, a streak. Jill waded out and called to Jack to help him. Up, down, up, down, until under his skilful hand the trout was dragged out on the bank at Jack's very feet. 'At least a three-pounder,' groaned Jack, and then the wee small voice made a suggestion. Jack listened, then gave in, and—well, Jack suddenly began to abuse his partner. Jill was astounded.

"'It's my pool! Get out, Jill; get out!

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I came to it first, and here you are wading around in it and mudding it all up as if you owned this stream. I can't get a bite. Get out, I say!' He waved his fist threateningly.

"'But Jack,' cried Jill surprisedly, 'we came to the pool together. I'm——'

"'The thunder we did!' roared Jack, his temper slipping faster and faster. 'The thunder we did!—I was here at least two minutes before you. Get out of it, I say, or I'll punch your face. You're a sneak to come in that way. That last big fish is mine by rights.'

"Both boys were intoxicated with the wild desire for game. Both boys were tired and nervous. Both boys forgot themselves.

"'I'll not move an inch, Jack,' cried Jill hotly. 'Move on yourself, if you don't like it. You can't fish anyway, you big boob!'

"In the meantime Jill's last splendid prize slipped from his hook, turned two very zig-zagged flip-flops and slid back into the water. Jill cried aloud and grabbed, but it was too late; the fish was gone.

"Jack laughed outright (at the suggestion of the wee voice). Jill became savage. Yet being of a cooler disposition he held his tongue, only he was hurt, hurt to the

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quick. That laugh—it was almost fiendish —drove him mad. Blindly he gathered up his line, blindly he rushed up the zigzag trail, around the base of a great cliff, holding onto the stout bushes in the crevices; up through a little grove of trees that clung tenaciously to the polished surface, and then his eye caught a green swirling pool of deep green water beyond. If he could only reach it! He let himself slowly down and down until his foot rested on a clump of bushes growing in a fissure. Here he found a footing and prepared to fish. Having crossed over the last bluff he was now not a hundred feet from where the mad torrent leaped to the foaming bed. The roar shut out everything. Jill was nervous and out of sorts. First he lost a fly, then he snarled his line, and then he snagged his sweater.

"At last, in desperation, he slipped his haversack off and hung it over a protruding root. Then being more free he began again with more success. As things straightened themselves out Jill's mind returned to the dispute. That laugh rang in his ears again and again until it burned his very heart. Before he knew it he was idly dan-

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gling his line in the water and he was lost in thought. He had never, never had a cross word from Jack, and it hurt far more than blows. An idle little eddy caught his line and carried it out into the pool then sank it in a pile of drift-wood. He pulled, but alas it was fast. He pulled again, and pulled it in two, losing by far the larger piece in the water. What should he do? He had no other line. Jack had plenty. He would go back, make his peace with Jack and incidentally borrow a new line.

"He arose, and noticed for the very first time the perilousness of his position. One false step, one tiny slip, and Jill would make food for the fishes far, far below him. Slowly he retraced his steps until he reached the grove of stunted trees above. Here he knew not which way to turn. The trail was apparently shut off. Try as he might, he could not see his way over the bluff without making a long détour.

"At last in desperation he did détour, over fallen granite blocks, around great boulders by the side of which he was a mere pigmy. On he trudged until at last he came out on top of the ridge. He knew that Jack was fishing far below him, but was not conscious

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of the hour he had consumed in that détour. After another half hour's careful mountaineering he reached the water's side, only to be disappointed, for Jack had gone.

"Jill thought rapidly. Might he have gone down stream? No, that was impossible. There was but one trail, and Jill had come on it. Jack could not have passed him. 'He has become tired of waiting, perhaps, and being mad has gone to camp,' said Jill aloud. 'I'll go too.'

"But his heart was heavy as he turned toward the camp, for never before had they gone or come separately. How strange it seemed to him now to be alone. He wondered what the Chief would say to him, for the last thing he had warned them to do was to stay together. Yet, was he to blame? He had not started it. He was sorry from the bottom of his heart. Yet why had Jack treated him so! and again he heard that cruel laugh as his big prize, the biggest fish of all the catch, slipped back into the water. Yes, he would forgive Jack. After all, he had just lost his temper. He had seen him do it before, but never had he been the object of its fury. It seemed different, and

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he was bothered as he sauntered along the narrow trail toward the camp.

"But Jack had found, much to his displeasure, that, even after Jill's desertion, he still had no luck. He was ashamed of himself from the bottom up. He hated the wee small voice, and himself for listening to it. He gradually drifted into more thinking than fishing, and every moment he was more out of patience with himself for his ungentlemanly conduct. Could Jill, his very best pal, forgive him? Would Jill forgive him?

" 'I'm a scoundrel,' he said, half aloud. 'I'm a—a great friend, ain't I?' and for half a cent he would have wept. Suddenly a great lonesomeness closed in upon him, for he was not used to fishing alone. He bent down and dashed some cold water into his hot face. It cooled him. His manhood began to assert itself and, being a real man at heart, it didn't take him long to decide what he would do.

" 'I'll go to Jill and square myself, like a man. That's what I'll do!' he said, half aloud. 'I'm a cad, and I know it. I know Jill will understand it was just my awful pride again.'

"Hastily he wound up his line and cast his

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"HE GRADUALLY DRIFTED INTO MORE THINKING THAN FISHING"

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pole into the stream, slipped into his sweater, for the sun was getting low, and took to the trail. He wondered how far ahead Jill was and if he would show a friendly spirit when he approached him. He was sure he would.

"In a few moments he emerged from the grove of stunted trees and looked below him. He heard the thundering of the falls and he noticed the polished cliff like a great slide, but he saw no Jill. Then suddenly his eye caught Jill's haversack caught on a root half way down the mountain. His heart went down with a thump. His breath came in small short gasps as the real meaning of it all came home to him. Ahead lay the falls. Jill could not have gone any further of his own will; below lay his bag, and then he noticed for the first time the tangled string, the abandoned pole, half in, half out, of the water. It sickened him. It frightened him. In an instant he was wild.

" 'Jill! Jill!' he called as loud as his voice could call. 'Jill, Jill, answer me!' but only the crags echoed back, while the water mocked and roared and drowned his puny voice.

" 'Oh! Jill is drowned,' he sobbed aloud—

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'drowned! drowned!' He clutched at the bushes and saved himself, then again he called, but no answer.

"He worked his way to the water's edge, hardly caring how much he dared. He peered into the great green pool that swirled and circled, carrying here a limb and there a leaf, or beaver cutting, or stray feather. He worked his way to the edge of the falls and looked over into that mountain of dead trees, great rocks, and trash, then shivered as he pictured poor Jill, cold and still somewhere below him. In agony he moaned, 'He's dead! He's dead!—and—and I killed him. O Jill, come back, come back. I'm so sorry!' But Jill did not appear.

"As he sat he quieted a bit, and soon, although he hardly knew it, he turned and retraced his steps, traveling faster and faster until he was running—running toward camp and suffering all the agonies that come to a self-accused man—a murderer.

"At last he came in view of camp, and suddenly halted. Could he take that news to camp—Jill dead, lost—because they had quarreled? Could he? Then the wee small voice came back with a suggestion: 'Why tell of the quarrel at all? Just let them think

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he slipped in by accident, which he did, and was drowned: it would be the truth.'

"Jack was furious. Do a trick like that —never! He would go straight to the Chief and tell him, like a man. Even if it killed him, he would do it.

"What was that!

" 'Jack!'

" 'Jill!'

"Jill came hurrying down the trail toward him, a great rope coiled on his arm.

"Jack sank down on the soft turf and fainted dead away, while the cold perspiration poured from his fatigued and nervous body.

"Jill returning to camp and not finding Jack there had become suddenly frightened as to his safety; had gone straight to the Chief and told him all. In less than five minutes a rescue party was arranged and they were just starting on their way when Jack put in his appearance.

"Soon Jack was brought around, and the first words he breathed, as he clutched Jill's outstretched hand, were, 'Jill, I'm sorry. Forgive me!'

"Jill's eyes, and those of many of the rest of us, filled with tears and he cried as he pat-

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ted the hand of his best companion, 'Sure I'll forgive you, old scout. Now let's forget it.'

"After supper that night the Chief talked to us at the camp fire—one of those quiet helpful talks of his, and ended by asking all of us to stand and, with our arms on each other's shoulders, he said over for us the lines that 'Reuben Strawstack' had given us at our farewell camp fire our first camp together. Fellows, let's stand tonight the same way and I'll say them for *you*. For I know we, every man of us, feel tonight about any wrongs or misunderstandings that have arisen among us on this joyous long-to-be-remembered trip, just as Jill did on that night when he said with unmistakable feeling in his voice—'Sure, Jack, I'll forgive you, old scout, and now let's forget it.'

"Fellows, it's really our farewell prayer, so let's bow together:

"'I've been thinkin', dear Campfire Companions,—
Wuz it wakin', er durin' a dream?—
Uv late, ez it's come time fer partin',
Uv a Camp by a fur-distant stream;
Uv a Camp whar no storms ever bother,
No stones nor sticks roughen the beds;
Whar the flowers an' the trees never wither,

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An' nothin' thet's troublesome treads;
Whar thar's waters tew row on an' drink uv,
An' wonderful mountains tew climb,
An' never no end tew pervisions,
An' never no camp-breakin' time;
Whar the tents is ez white ez a snowdrift,
An' the birds sing the purtiest tunes,
An' the breezes is cool an' refreshin',
An' the months uv the year is all Junes.
I've bin wond'rin' ef someday us fellars,
Thet here hev shared climbin' an' tramp
An' fishin', an' boatin', an' bonfire,
Will meet in thet beautiful Camp.
Tent Two, will yew furnish the bonfire,
An' pile it with plenty uv wood,
An' fix it tew sparkle up proper,
An' see thet the program is good?
Tent Three, will yew tend tew hash-slingin',
Whenever it happens yer turn,
An' furnish us plenty uv vittles,
An' git Si the wood fer tew burn?
Tent Four, will yew bring long yer tackle,
An' furnish the table with fish,—
Not jest a few sunfish an' suckers,—
But all uv the trout thet we wish?
An' Tent One, thet the manager bunked in,
An' whar yer ol' Reuben hez bosst,
Will yew take the job uv a-seein'
Thet none uv our number is lost?
Oh, wuddent it be wuth a-tryin'—

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Tew come back tewgether up thar,
After years full uv hon'rable sarvice,
A-comin' from near an' from far—
The Number One men a-unpackin',
An' pitchin' the tents with care;
The Number Two men singin' nonsense
Tew the tune uv the Climbin' Bear;
The Number Three men settin' table,
An' fixin' up things fer the cook;
The Number Four men cuttin' fishpoles
Er riggin' the line an' the hook?—
An' fellars, tew git thar is easy,
Ef we hit the right trail in our youth,—
Jest take holt uv han's with the Saviour,
An' stick tew our dooty an' Truth.
Le's shake han's, then, here before partin',
An' promise in brotherly love,
Thet ef Christ will jest help us tew find it,
We'll meet in thet Camp up above.' " *

"I'm going to hit that trail tonight, Jed," whispered Redhead as he squeezed Jed's hand. "There's going to be some tough climbing, but I'm game."

"Put her there, old boy," said Jed quietly. "Now, good night."

"Good night, Jed."

*Wm. Merrill Vories: Reuben Strawstack's Diary of Camp Tecumseh.

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